ROSALIND AT REDGATE

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

Velma Parkansky

ROSALIND AT RED GATE

The carnival of canoes

ROSALIND AT RED GATE

By

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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TO MY MOTHER

Rosalind: *I thought thy heart had been wounded with the claws of a lion.*

Orlando: *Wounded it is, but with the eyes of a lady.*

As You Like It.

"*Then dame Liones said unto Sir Gareth, Sir, I will lend you a ring, but I would pray you as ye love me heartily let me have it again when the tournament is done, for that ring increaseth my beauty much more than it is of itself. And the virtue of my ring is that that is green it will turn to red, and that is red it will turn in likeness to green, and that is blue it will turn to likeness of white, and that is white, it will turn in likeness to blue, and so it will do of all manner of colours.*"

Morte Darthur.

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ROSALIND AT RED GATE

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CHAPTER I

A TELEGRAM FROM PAUL STODDARD

Up, up, my heart! Up, up, my heart,
This day was made for thee!
For soon the hawthorn spray shall part,
And thou a face shalt see
That comes, O heart, O foolish heart,
This way to gladden thee.

—*H. C. Bunner.*

Stoddard's telegram was brought to me on the Glenarm pier at four o'clock Tuesday afternoon, the fifth of June. I am thus explicit, for all the matters hereinafter described turn upon the receipt of Stoddard's message, which was, to be sure, harmless enough in itself, but, like many other scraps of paper that blow about the world, the forerunner of confusion and trouble.

My friend, Mr. John Glenarm, had gone abroad for the summer with his family and had turned over to me

his house at Annandale that I might enjoy its seclusion and comfort while writing my book on *Russian Rivers*.

If John Glenarm had not taken his family abroad with him when he went to Turkey to give the sultan's engineers lessons in bridge building; if I had not accepted his kind offer of the house at Annandale for the summer; and if Paul Stoddard had not sent me that telegram, I should never have written this narrative. But such was the predestined way of it. I rose from the boat I was caulking, and, with the waves from the receding steamer slapping the pier, read this message:

STAMFORD, Conn., June 5.

Meet Miss Patricia Holbrook Annandale station, five twenty Chicago express and conduct her to St. Agatha's school, where she is expected. She will explain difficulties. I have assured her of your sympathy and aid. Will join you later if necessary. Imperative engagements call me elsewhere. STODDARD.

To say that I was angry when I read this message is to belittle the truth. I read and re-read it with growing heat. I had accepted Glenarm's offer of the house at Annandale because it promised peace, and now I was ordered by telegraph to meet a strange person of whom I had never heard, listen to her story, and tender my sympathy and aid. I glanced at my watch. It was

already after four. "Delayed in transmission" was stamped across the telegraph form—I learned later that it had lain half the day in Annandale, New York—so that I was now face to face with the situation, and without opportunity to fling his orders back to Stoddard if I wanted to. Nor did I even know Stamford from Stamboul, and I am not yet clear in my mind—being an Irishman with rather vague notions of American geography—whether Connecticut is north or south of Massachusetts.

"Ijima!"

I called my Japanese boy from the boat-house, and he appeared, paint-brush in hand.

"Order the double trap, and tell them to hurry."

I reflected, as I picked up my coat and walked toward the house, that if any one but Paul Stoddard had sent me such a message I should most certainly have ignored it; but I knew him as a man who did not make demands or impose obligations lightly. As the founder and superior of the Protestant religious Order of the Brothers of Bethlehem he was, I knew, an exceedingly busy man. His religious house was in the Virginia mountains; but he spent much time in quiet, humble service in city slums, in lumber-camps, in the mines of Pennsyl-

vania; and occasionally he appeared like a prophet from the wilderness in some great church of New York, and preached with a marvelous eloquence to wondering throngs.

The trap swung into the arched driveway and I bade the coachman make haste to the Annandale station. The handsome bays were soon trotting swiftly toward the village, while I drew on my gloves and considered the situation. A certain Miss Holbrook, of whose existence I had been utterly ignorant an hour before, was about to arrive at Annandale. A clergyman, whom I had not seen for two years, had telegraphed me from a town in Connecticut to meet this person, conduct her to St. Agatha's School—just closed for the summer, as I knew—and to volunteer my services in difficulties that were darkly indicated in a telegram of forty-five words. The sender of the message I knew to be a serious character, and a gentleman of distinguished social connections. The name of the lady signified nothing except that she was unmarried; and as Stoddard's acquaintance was among all sorts and conditions of men I could assume nothing more than that the unknown had appealed to him as a priest and that he had sent her to Lake Annandale to shake off the burdens of the

world in the conventual air of St. Agatha's. High-born Italian ladies, I knew, often retired to remote convents in the Italian hills for meditation or penance. Miss Holbrook's age I placed conservatively at twenty-nine; for no better reason, perhaps, than that I am thirty-two.

The blue arch of June does not encourage difficulties, doubts or presentiments; and with the wild rose abloom along the fences and with robins tossing their song across the highway I ceased to growl and found curiosity getting the better of my temper. Expectancy, after all, is the cheerfullest tonic of life, and when the time comes when I can see the whole of a day's programme from my breakfast-table I shall be ready for man's last adventure.

I smoothed my gloves and fumbled my tie as the bays trotted briskly along the lake shore. The Chicago express whistled for Annandale just as we gained the edge of the village. It paused a grudging moment and was gone before we reached the station. I jumped out and ran through the waiting-room to the platform, where the agent was gathering up the mail-bags, while an assistant loaded a truck with trunks. I glanced about, and the moment was an important one in my life. Standing

quite alone beside several pieces of hand-baggage was a lady—unmistakably a lady—leaning lightly upon an umbrella, and holding under her arm a magazine. She was clad in brown, from bonnet to shoes; the umbrella and magazine cover were of like tint, and even the suit-case nearest her struck the same note of color. There was no doubt whatever as to her identity; I did not hesitate a moment; the lady in brown was Miss Holbrook, and she was an old lady, a dear, bewitching old lady, and as I stepped toward her, her eyes brightened—they, too, were brown!—and she put out her brown-gloved hand with a gesture so frank and cordial that I was won at once.

"Mr. Donovan—Mr. Laurance Donovan—I am sure of it!"

"Miss Holbrook—I am equally confident!" I said. "I am sorry to be late, but Father Stoddard's message was delayed."

"You are kind to respond at all," she said, her wonderful eyes upon me; "but Father Stoddard said you would not fail me."

"He is a man of great faith! But I have a trap waiting. We can talk more comfortably at St. Agatha's."

"Yes; we are to go to the school. Father Stoddard kindly arranged it. It is quite secluded, he assured me."

"You will not be disappointed, Miss Holbrook, if seclusion is what you seek."

I picked up the brown bag and turned away, but she waited and glanced about. Her "we" had puzzled me; perhaps she had brought a maid, and I followed her glance toward the window of the telegraph office.

"Oh, Helen; my niece, Helen Holbrook, is with me. I wished to wire some instructions to my housekeeper at home. Father Stoddard may not have explained—that it is partly on Helen's account that I am coming here."

"No; he explained nothing—merely gave me my instructions," I laughed. "He gives orders in a most militant fashion."

In a moment I had been presented to the niece, and had noted that she was considerably above her aunt's height; that she was dark, with eyes that seemed quite black in certain lights, and that she bowed, as her aunt presented me, without offering her hand, and murmured my name in a voice musical, deep and full, and agreeable to hear.

She took their checks from her purse, and I called the porter and arranged for the transfer of their luggage

to St. Agatha's. We were soon in the trap with the bays carrying us at a lively clip along the lake road. It was all perfectly new to them and they expressed their delight in the freshness of the young foliage; the billowing fields of ripening wheat, the wild rose, blackberry and elderberry filling the angles of the stake-and-rider fences, and the flashing waters of the lake that carried the eye to distant wooded shores. I turned in my seat by the driver to answer their questions.

"There's a summer resort somewhere on the lake; how far is that from the school?" asked the girl.

"That's Port Annandale. It's two or three miles from St. Agatha's," I replied. "On this side and all the way to the school there are farms. The lake looks like an oval pond as we see it here, but there are several long arms that creep off into the woods, and there's another lake of considerable size to the north. Port Annandale lies yonder."

"Of course we shall see nothing of it," said the younger Miss Holbrook with finality.

I sought in vain for any resemblance between the two women; they were utterly unlike. The little brown lady was interested and responsive enough; she turned toward her niece with undisguised affection as we talked,

but I caught several times a look of unhappiness in her face, and the brow that Time had not touched gathered in lines of anxiety and care. The girl's manner toward her aunt was wholly kind and sympathetic.

"I'm sure it will be delightful here, Aunt Pat. Wild roses and blue water! I'm quite in love with the pretty lake already."

This was my first introduction to the diminutive of Patricia, and it seemed very fitting, and as delightful as the dear little woman herself. She must have caught my smile as the niece so addressed her for the first time and she smiled back at me in her charming fashion.

"You are an Irishman, Mr. Donovan, and Pat must sound natural."

"Oh, all who love Aunt Patricia call her Aunt Pat!" exclaimed the girl.

"Then Miss Holbrook undoubtedly hears it often," said I, and was at once sorry for my bit of blarney, for the tears shone suddenly in the dear brown eyes, and the niece recurred to the summer landscape as a topic, and talked of the Glenarm place, whose stone wall we were now passing, until we drove into the grounds of St. Agatha's and up to the main entrance of the school,

where a Sister in the brown garb of her order stood waiting.

I first introduced myself to Sister Margaret, who was in charge, and then presented the two ladies who were to be her guests. It was disclosed that Sister Theresa, the head of the school, had wired instructions from York Harbor, where she was spending the summer, touching Miss Holbrook's reception, and her own rooms were at the disposal of the guests. St. Agatha's is, as all who are attentive to such matters know, a famous girls' school founded by Sister Theresa, and one felt its quality in the appointments of the pretty, cool parlor where we were received. Sister Margaret said just the right thing to every one, and I was glad to find her so capable a person, fully able to care for these exiles without aid from my side of the wall. She was a tall, fair young woman, with a cheerful countenance, and her merry eyes seemed always to be laughing at one from the depths of her brown hood. Pleasantly hospitable, she rang for a maid.

"Helen, if you will see our things disposed of I will detain Mr. Donovan a few minutes," said Miss Holbrook.

"Or I can come again in an hour—I am your near

neighbor," I remarked, thinking she might wish to rest from her journey.

"I am quite ready," she replied, and I bowed to Helen Holbrook and to Sister Margaret, who went out, followed by the maid. Miss Pat—you will pardon me if I begin at once to call her by this name, but it fits her so capitally, it is so much a part of her, that I can not resist—Miss Pat put off her bonnet without fuss, placed it on the table and sat down in a window-seat whence the nearer shore of the lake was visible across the strip of smooth lawn.

"Father Stoddard thought it best that I should explain the necessity that brings us here," she began; "but the place is so quiet that it seems absurd to think that our troubles could follow us."

I bowed. The idea of this little woman's being driven into exile by any sort of trouble seemed preposterous. She drew off her gloves and leaned back comfortably against the bright pillows of the window-seat. "Watch the hands of the guest in the tent," runs the Arabian proverb. Miss Pat's hands seemed to steal appealingly out of her snowy cuffs; there was no age in them. The breeding showed there as truly as in her eyes and face. On the third finger of her left hand she wore a singu-

larly fine emerald, set in an oddly carved ring of Roman gold.

"Will you please close the door?" she said, and when I came back to the window she began at once.

"It is not pleasant, as you must understand, to explain to a stranger an intimate and painful family trouble. But Father Stoddard advised me to be quite frank with you."

"That is the best way, if there is a possibility that I may be of service," I said in the gentlest tone I could command. "But tell me no more than you wish. I am wholly at your service without explanations."

"It is in reference to my brother; he has caused me a great deal of trouble. When my father died nearly ten years ago—he lived to a great age—he left a considerable estate, a large fortune. A part of it was divided at once among my two brothers and myself. The remainder, amounting to one million dollars, was left to me, with the stipulation that I was to make a further division between my brothers at the end of ten years, or at my discretion. I was older than my brothers, much older, and my father left me with this responsibility, not knowing what it would lead to. Henry and Arthur succeeded to my father's business, the banking

firm of Holbrook Brothers, in New York. The bank continued to prosper for a time; then it collapsed suddenly. The debts were all paid, but Arthur disappeared —there were unpleasant rumors—"

She paused a moment, and looked out of the window toward the lake, and I saw her clasped hands tighten; but she went on bravely.

"That was seven years ago. Since then Henry has insisted on the final division of the property. My father had a high sense of honor and he stipulated that if either of his sons should be guilty of any dishonorable act he should forfeit his half of the million dollars. Henry insists that Arthur has forfeited his rights and that the amount withheld should be paid to him now; but his conduct has been such that I feel I should serve him ill to pay him so large a sum of money. Moreover, I owe something to his daughter—to Helen. Owing to her father's reckless life I have had her make her home with me for several years. She is a noble girl, and very beautiful—you must have seen, Mr. Donovan, that she is an unusually beautiful girl."

"Yes," I assented.

"And better than that," she said with feeling, "she is a very lovely character."

I nodded, touched to see how completely Helen Holbrook filled and satisfied her aunt's life. Miss Pat continued her story.

"My brother first sought to frighten me into a settlement by menacing my own peace; and now he includes Helen in his animosity. My house at Stamford was set on fire a month ago; then thieves entered it and I was obliged to leave. We arranged to go abroad, but when we got to the steamer we found Henry waiting with a threat to follow us if I did not accede to his demands. It was Father Stoddard who suggested this place, and we came by a circuitous route, pausing here and there to see whether we were followed. We were in the Adirondacks for a week, then we went into Canada, crossed the lake to Cleveland and finally came on here. You can imagine how distressing—how wretched all this has been."

"Yes; it is a sad story, Miss Holbrook. But you are not likely to be molested here. You have a lake on one side, a high wall shuts off the road, and I beg you to accept me as your near neighbor and protector. The servants at Mr. Glenarm's house have been with him for several years and are undoubtedly trustworthy. It is not likely that your brother will find you here, but if

he should—we will deal with that situation when the time comes!"

"You are very reassuring; no doubt we shall not need to call on you. And I hope you understand," she continued anxiously, "that it is not to keep the money that I wish to avoid my brother; that if it were wise to make this further division at this time and it were for his good, I should be glad to give him all—every penny of it."

"Pardon me, but the other brother—he has not made similar demands—you do not fear him?" I inquired with some hesitation.

"No—no!" And a tremulous smile played about her lips. "Poor Arthur! He must be dead. He ran away after the bank failure and I have never heard from him since. He and Henry were very unlike, and I always felt more closely attached to Arthur. He was not brilliant, like Henry; he was gentle and quiet in his ways, and father was often impatient with him. Henry has been very bitter toward Arthur and has appealed to me on the score of Arthur's ill-doing. It took all his own fortune, he says, to save Arthur and the family name from dishonor."

She was remarkably composed throughout this recital,

and I marveled at her more and more. Now, after a moment's silence, she turned to me with a smile.

"We have been annoyed in another way. It is so ridiculous that I hesitate to tell you of it—"

"Pray do not—you need tell me nothing more, Miss Holbrook."

"It is best for you to know. My niece has been annoyed the past year by the attentions of a young man whom she greatly dislikes and whose persistence distresses her very much indeed."

"Well, he can hardly find her here; and if he should—"

Miss Holbrook folded her arms upon her knees and smiled, bending toward me. The loveliness of her hair, which she wore parted and brushed back at the temples, struck me for the first time. The brown—I was sure it had been brown!—had yielded to white—there was no gray about it; it was the soft white of summer clouds.

"Oh!" she exclaimed; "he isn't a violent person, Mr. Donovan. He's silly, absurd, idiotic! You need fear no violence from him."

"And of course your niece is not interested—he's not a fellow to appeal to her imagination."

"That is quite true; and then in our present un-

happy circumstances, with her father hanging over her like a menace, marriage is far from her thoughts. She feels that even if she were attached to a man and wished to marry, she could not. I wish she did not feel so; I should be glad to see her married and settled in her own home. These difficulties can not last always; but while they continue we are practically exiles. Helen has taken it all splendidly, and her loyalty to me is beyond anything I could ask. It's a very dreadful thing, as you can understand, for brother and sister and father and child to be arrayed against one another."

I wished to guide the talk into cheerfuller channels before leaving. Miss Pat seemed amused by the thought of the unwelcome suitor, and I determined to leave her with some word in reference to him.

"If a strange knight in quest of a lady comes riding through the wood, how shall I know him? What valorous words are written on his shield, and does he carry a lance or a suit-case?"

"He is the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance," said Miss Holbrook in my own key, as she rose. "You would know him anywhere by his clothes and the remarkable language he uses. He is not to be taken very seriously—that's the trouble with him! But I have been

afraid that he and my brother might join hands in the pursuit of us."

"But the Sorrowful Knight would not advance his interests by that—he could only injure his cause!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, he has no subtlety; he's a very foolish person; he blunders at windmills with quixotic ardor. You understand, of course, that our troubles are not known widely. We used to be a family of some dignity,"—and Miss Patricia drew herself up a trifle and looked me straight in the eyes—"and I hope still for happier years."

"Won't you please say good night to Miss Holbrook for me?" I said, my hand on the door.

And then an odd thing happened. I was about to take my departure through the front hall when I remembered a short cut to the Glenarm gate from the rear of the school. I walked the length of the parlor to a door that would, I knew, give ready exit to the open. I bowed to Miss Pat, who stood erect, serene, adorable, in the room that was now touched with the first shadows of waning day, and her slight figure was so eloquent of pathos, her smile so brave, that I bowed again, with a reverence I already felt for her.

Then as I flung the door open and stepped into the hall I heard the soft swish of skirts, a light furtive step, and caught a glimpse—or could have sworn I did—of white. There was only one Sister in the house, and a few servants; it seemed incredible that they could be eavesdropping upon this guest of the house. I crossed a narrow hall, found the rear door, and passed out into the park. Something prompted me to turn when I had taken a dozen steps toward the Glenarm gate. The vines on the gray stone buildings were cool to the eye with their green that hung like a tapestry from eaves to earth. And suddenly, as though she came out of the ivied wall itself, Helen Holbrook appeared on the little balcony opening from one of the first-floor rooms, rested the tips of her fingers on the green vine-clasped rail, and, seeing me, bowed and smiled.

She was gowned in white, with a scarlet ribbon at her throat, and the green wall vividly accented and heightened her outline. I stood, staring like a fool for what seemed a century of heart-beats as she flashed forth there, out of what seemed a sheer depth of masonry; then she turned her head slightly, as though in disdain of me, and looked off toward the lake. I had uncovered at sight of her, and found, when I gained

the broad hall at Glenarm House, that I still carried my hat.

An hour later, as I dined in solitary state, that white figure was still present before me; and I could not help wondering, though the thought angered me, whether that graceful head had been bent against the closed door of the parlor at St. Agatha's, and (if such were the fact) why Helen Holbrook, who clearly enjoyed the full confidence of her aunt, should have stooped to such a trick to learn what Miss Patricia said to me.

CHAPTER II

CONFIDENCES

When Spring grows old, and sleepy winds
  Set from the South with odors sweet,
I see my love in green, cool groves,
  Speed down dusk aisles on shining feet.

She throws a kiss and bids me run,
  In whispers sweet as roses' breath;
I know I can not win the race,
  And at the end I know is death.

O race of love! we all have run
  Thy happy course through groves of spring,
And cared not, when at last we lost,
  For life, or death, or anything!

—*Atalanta: Maurice Thompson.*

Miss Patricia received me the following afternoon on the lawn at St. Agatha's where, in a cool angle of the buildings, a maid was laying the cloth on a small table.

"It is good of you to come. Helen will be here presently. She went for a walk on the shore."

"You must both of you make free of the Glenarm preserve. Don't consider the wall over there a barricade;

it's merely to add to the picturesqueness of the landscape."

Miss Patricia was quite rested from her journey, and expressed her pleasure in the beauty and peace of the place in frank and cordial terms. And to-day I suspected, what later I fully believed, that she affected certain old-fashioned ways in a purely whimsical spirit. Her heart was young enough, but she liked to play at being old! Sister Theresa's own apartments had been placed at her disposal, and the house, Miss Patricia declared, was delightfully cool.

"I could ask nothing better than this. Sister Margaret is most kind in every way. Helen and I have had a peaceful twenty-four hours—the first in two years—and I feel that at last we have found safe harborage."

"Rest assured of it, Miss Holbrook! The summer colony is away off there and you need see nothing of it; it is quite out of sight and sound. You have seen Annandale—the sleepiest of American villages, with a curio shop and a candy and soda-fountain place and a picture post-card booth which the young ladies of St. Agatha's patronize extensively when they are here. The summer residents are just beginning to arrive on their shore, but they will not molest you. If they try to land

over here we'll train our guns on them and blow them out of the water. As your neighbor beyond the iron gate of Glenarm I beg that you will look upon me as your man-at-arms. My sword, Madam, I lay at your feet."

"Sheathe it, Sir Laurance; nor draw it save in honorable cause," she returned on the instant, and then she was grave again.

"Sister Margaret is most kind in every way; she seems wholly discreet, and has assured me of her interest and sympathy," said Miss Patricia, as though she wished me to confirm her own impression.

"There's no manner of doubt of it. She is Sister Theresa's assistant. It is inconceivable that she could possibly interfere in your affairs. I believe you are perfectly safe here in every way, Miss Holbrook. If at the end of a week your brother has made no sign, we shall be reasonably certain that he has lost the trail."

"I believe that is true; and I thank you very much."

I had come prepared to be disillusioned, to find her charm gone, but her small figure had even an added distinction; her ways, her manner an added grace. I found myself resisting the temptation to call her quaint, as implying too much; yet I felt that in some olden

time, on some noble estate in England, or, better, in some storied colonial mansion in Virginia, she must have had her home in years long gone, living on with no increase of age to this present. She was her own law, I judged, in the matter of fashion. I observed later a certain uniformity in the cut of her gowns, as though, at some period, she had found a type wholly comfortable and to her liking and thereafter had clung to it. She suggested peace and gentleness and a beautiful patience; and I strove to say amusing things, that I might enjoy her rare luminous smile and catch her eyes when she gave me her direct gaze in the quick, challenging way that marked her as a woman of position and experience, who had been more given to command than to obey.

"Did you think I was never coming, Aunt Pat? That shore-path calls for more strenuous effort than I imagined, and I had to change my gown again."

Helen Holbrook advanced quickly and stood by her aunt's chair, nodding to me smilingly, and while we exchanged the commonplaces of the day, she caught up Miss Pat's hand and held it a moment caressingly. The maid now brought the tea, Miss Pat poured it and the talk went forward cheerily.

The girl was in white, and at the end of a curved bench, with a variety of colored cushions about her and the bright sward and tranquil lake beyond, she made a picture wholly agreeable to my eyes. Her hair was dead black, and I saw for the first time that its smooth line on her brow was broken by one of those curious, rare little points called widow's peak. They are not common, nor, to be sure, are they important; yet it seemed somehow to add interest to her graceful pretty head.

It was quite clear in a moment that Helen was bent on treating me rather more amiably than on the day before, while at the same time showing her aunt every deference. I was relieved to find them both able to pitch their talk in a light key. The thought of sitting daily and drearily discussing their troubles with two exiled women had given me a dark moment at the station the day before; but we were now having tea in the cheerfullest fashion in the world; and, as for their difficulties, I had no idea whatever that they would be molested so long as they remained quietly at Annandale. Miss Pat and her niece were not the hysterical sort; both apparently enjoyed sound health, and they were not the kind of women who see ghosts in every alcove and go to bed to escape the lightning.

"Oh, Mr. Donovan," said Helen Holbrook, as I put down her cup, "there are some letters I should like to write and I wish you would tell me whether it is safe to have letters come for us to Annandale; or would it be better to send nothing from here at all? It does seem odd to have to ask such a question—" and she concluded in a tone of distress and looked at me appealingly.

"We must take no risks whatever, Helen," remarked Miss Pat decisively.

"Does no one know where you are?" I inquired of Miss Patricia.

"My lawyer, in New York, has the name of this place, sealed; and he put it away in a safety box and promised not to open it unless something of very great importance happened."

"It is best to take no chances," I said; "so I should answer your question in the negative, Miss Holbrook. In the course of a few weeks everything may seem much clearer; and in the meantime it will be wiser not to communicate with the outer world."

"They deliver mail through the country here, don't they?" asked Helen. "It must be a great luxury for the farmers to have the post-office at their very doors."

"We must take no risks whatever, Helen." Page 26

"Yes, but the school and Mr. Glenarm always send for their own mail to Annandale."

"Our mail is all going to my lawyer," said Miss Pat, "and it must wait until we can have it sent to us without danger."

"Certainly, Aunt Pat," replied Helen readily. "I didn't mean to give Mr. Donovan the impression that my correspondence was enormous; but it is odd to be shut up in this way and not to be able to do as one likes in such little matters."

The wind blew in keenly from the lake as the sun declined and Helen went unasked and brought an India shawl and put it about Miss Pat's shoulders. The girl's thoughtfulness for her aunt's comfort pleased me, and I found myself liking her better.

It was time for me to leave and I picked up my hat and stick. As I started away I was aware that Helen Holbrook detained me without in the least appearing to do so, following a few steps to gain, as she said, a certain view of the lake that was particularly charming.

"There is nothing rugged in this landscape, but it is delightful in its very tranquillity," she said, as we loitered on, the shimmering lake before us, the wood behind ablaze with the splendor of the sun. She spoke of

the beauty of the beeches, which are of noble girth in this region, and paused to indicate a group of them whose smooth trunks were like massive pillars. As we looked back I saw that Miss Pat had gone into the house, driven no doubt by the persistency of the west wind that crisped the lake. Helen's manner changed abruptly, and she said:

"If any difficulty should arise here, if my poor father should find out where we are, I trust that you may be able to save my aunt anxiety and pain. That is what I wished to say to you, Mr. Donovan."

"Certainly," I replied, meeting her eyes, and noting a quiver of the lips that was eloquent of deep feeling and loyalty. She continued beside me, her head erect as though by a supreme effort of self-control, and with I knew not what emotions shaking her heart. She continued silent as we marched on and I felt that there was the least defiance in her air; then she drew a handkerchief from her sleeve, touched it lightly to her eyes, and smiled.

"I had not thought of quite following you home! Here is Glenarm gate—and there lie your battlements and towers."

"Rather they belong to my old friend, John Glenarm.

In his goodness of heart he gave me the use of the place for the summer; and as generosity with another's property is very easy, I hereby tender you our fleet—canoes, boats, steam launch—and the stable, which contains a variety of traps and a good riding-horse or two. They are all at your service. I hope that you and your aunt will not fail to avail yourselves of each and all. Do you ride? I was specially charged to give the horses exercise."

"Thank you very much," she said. "When we are well settled, and feel more secure, we shall be glad to call on you. Father Stoddard certainly served us well in sending us to you, Mr. Donovan."

In a moment she spoke again, quite slowly, and with, I thought, a very pretty embarrassment.

"Aunt Pat may have spoken of another difficulty—a mere annoyance, really," and she smiled at me gravely.

"Oh, yes; of the youngster who has been troubling you. Your father and he have, of course, no connection."

"No; decidedly not. But he is a very offensive person, Mr. Donovan. It would be a matter of great distress to me if he should pursue us to this place."

"It is inconceivable that a gentleman—if he is a gentleman—should follow you merely for the purpose of

annoying you. I have heard that young ladies usually know how to get rid of importunate suitors."

"I have heard that they have that reputation," she laughed back. "But Mr. Gillespie—"

"That's the name, is it? Your aunt did not mention it."

"Yes; he lives quite near us at Stamford. Aunt Pat disliked his father before him, and now that he is dead she visits her displeasure on the son; but she is quite right about it. He is a singularly unattractive and uninteresting person, and I trust that he will not find us."

"That is quite unlikely. You will do well to forget all about him—forget all your troubles and enjoy the beauty of these June days."

We had reached Glenarm gate, and St. Agatha's was now hidden by the foliage along the winding path. I was annoyed to realize how much I enjoyed this idling. I felt my pulse quicken when our eyes met. Her dark oval face was beautiful with the loveliness of noble Italian women I had seen on great occasions in Rome. I had not known that hair could be so black, and it was fine and soft; the widow's peak was as sharply defined on her smooth forehead as though done with crayon. Dark women should always wear white, I reflected, as

she paused and lifted her head to listen to the chime in the tower of the little Gothic chapel—a miniature affair that stood by the wall—a chime that flung its melody on the soft summer air like a handful of rose-leaves. She picked up a twig and broke it in her fingers; and looking down I saw that she wore on her left hand an emerald ring identical with the one worn by her aunt. It was so like that I should have believed it the same, had I not noted Miss Pat's ring but a few minutes before. Helen threw away the bits of twig when we came to the wall, and, as I swung the gate open, paused mockingly with clasped hands and peered inside.

"I must go back," she said. Then, her manner changing, she dropped her hands at her side and faced me.

"You will warn me, Mr. Donovan, of the first approach of trouble. I wish to save my aunt in every way possible—she means so much to me; she has made life easy for me where it would have been hard."

"There will be no trouble, Miss Holbrook. You are as safe as though you were hidden in a cave in the Apennines; but I shall give you warning at the first sign of danger."

"My father is—is quite relentless," she murmured, averting her eyes.

I turned to retrace the path with her; but she forbade me and was gone swiftly—a flash of white through the trees—before I could parley with her. I stared after her as long as I could hear her light tread in the path. And when she had vanished a feeling of loneliness possessed me and the country quiet mocked me with its peace.

I clanged the Glenarm gates together sharply and went in to dinner; but I pondered long as I smoked on the star-hung terrace. Through the wood directly before me I saw lights flash from the small craft of the lake, and the sharp tum-tum of a naphtha launch rang upon the summer night. Insects made a blur of sound in the dark and the chant of the katydids rose and fell monotonously.

I flung away a half-smoked cigar and lighted my pipe. There was no disguising the truth that the coming of the Holbrooks had got on my nerves—at least that was my phrase for it. Now that I thought of it, they were impudent intruders and Paul Stoddard had gone too far in turning them over to me. There was nothing in their story, anyhow; it was preposterous, and I resolved to let them severely alone. But even as these thoughts ran through my mind I turned toward St. Agatha's,

whose lights were visible through the trees, and I knew that there was nothing honest in my impatience. Helen Holbrook's eyes were upon me and her voice called from the dark; and when the clock chimed nine in the tower beyond the wall memory brought back the graceful turn of her dark head, the firm curve of her throat as she had listened to the mellow fling of the bells.

And here, for the better instruction of those friends who amuse themselves with the idea that I am unusually susceptible, as they say, to the charms of woman, I beg my reader's indulgence while I state, quite honestly, the flimsy basis of this charge. Once, in my twentieth year, while I was still an undergraduate at Trinity, Dublin, I went to the Killarney Lakes for a week's end. My host—a fellow student—had taken me home to see his horses; but it was not his stable, but his blue-eyed sister, that captivated my fancy. I had not known that anything could be so beautiful as she was, and I feel and shall always feel that it was greatly to my credit that I fell madly in love with her. Our affair was fast and furious, and lamentably detrimental to my standing at Trinity. I wrote some pretty bad verses in her praise, and I am not in the least ashamed of that weakness, or that the best florist in Ireland prospered at

the expense of my tailor and laundress. It lasted a year, and to say that it was like a beautiful dream is merely to betray my poor command of language. The end, too, was fitting enough, and not without its compensations: I kissed her one night—she will not, I am sure, begrudge me the confession; it was a moonlight night in May; and thereafter within two months she married a Belfast brewer's son who could not have rhymed eyes with skies to save his malted soul.

Embittered by this experience I kept out of trouble for two years, and my next affair was with a widow, two years my senior, whom I met at a house in Scotland where I was staying for the shooting. She was a bit mournful, and lavender became her well. I forgot the grouse after my first day, and gave myself up to consoling her. She had, as no other woman I have known has had, a genius—it was nothing less—for graceful attitudes. To surprise her before an open fire, her prettily curved chin resting on her pink little palm, her eyes bright with lurking tears, and to see her lips twitch with the effort to restrain a sob when one came suddenly upon her—but the picture is not for my clumsy hand! I have never known whether she suffered me to make love to her merely as a distraction, or whether she

was briefly amused by my ardor and entertained by the new phrases of adoration I contrived for her. I loved her quite sincerely; I am glad to have experienced the tumult she stirred in me—glad that the folding of her little hands upon her knees, as she bent toward the lighted hearth in that old Scotch manor, and her low, murmuring, mournful voice, made my heart jump. I told her—and recall it without shame—that her eyes were adorable islands aswim in brimming seas, and that her hands were fluttering white doves of peace. I found that I could maintain that sort of thing without much trouble for an hour at a time.

I did not know it was the last good-by when I packed my bags and gun-cases and left one frosty morning. I regret nothing, but am glad it all happened just so. Her marriage to a clergyman in the Establishment—a duke's second son in holy orders who enjoyed considerable reputation as a cricketer—followed quickly, and I have never seen her since. I was in love with that girl for at least a month. It did me no harm, and I think she liked it herself.

I next went down before the slang of an American girl with teasing eyes and amazing skill at tennis, whom I met at Oxford when she was a student in Lady Mar-

garet. Her name was Iris and she was possessed by the spirit of Mischief. If you know aught of the English, you know that the average peaches-and-cream English girl is not, to put it squarely, exciting. Iris understood this perfectly and delighted in doing things no girl had ever done before in that venerable town. She lived at home—her family had taken a house out beyond Magdalen; and she went to and from the classic halls of Lady Margaret in a dog-cart, sometimes with a groom, sometimes without. When alone she dashed through the High at a gait which caused sedate matrons to stare and sober-minded fellows of the university to swear, and admiring undergraduates to chuckle with delight. I had gone to Oxford to consult a certain book in the Bodleian—a day's business only; but it fell about that in the post-office, where I had gone on an errand, I came upon Iris struggling for a cable-blank, and found one for her. As she stood at the receiving counter, impatiently waiting to file her message, she remarked, for the benefit, I believed, of a gaitered bishop at her elbow: "How perfectly rotten this place is!"—and winked at me. She was seventeen, and I was old enough to know better, but we had some talk, and the next day she bowed to me in front of St. Mary's and, the day after,

picked me up out near Keble and drove me all over town, and past Lady Margaret, and dropped me quite boldly at the door of the Mitre. Shameful! It was; but at the end of a week I knew all her family, including her father, who was bored to death, and her mother, who had thought it a fine thing to move from Zanesville, Ohio, to live in a noble old academic center like Oxford—that was what too much home-study and literary club had done for her.

Iris kept the cables hot with orders for clothes, caramels and shoes, while I lingered and hung upon her lightest slang and encouraged her in the idea that education in her case was a sinful waste of time; and I comforted her father for the loss of his native buckwheat cakes and consoled her mother, who found that seven of the perfect English servants of the story-books did less than the three she had maintained at Zanesville. I lingered in Oxford two months, and helped them get out of town when Iris was dropped from college for telling the principal that the Zanesville High School had Lady Margaret over the ropes for general educational efficiency, and that, moreover, she would not go to the Established Church because the litany bored her. Whereupon—their dependence on me having steadily in-

creased—I got them out of Oxford and over to Dresden, and Iris and I became engaged. Then I went to Ireland on a matter of business, made an incendiary speech in Galway, smashed a couple of policemen and landed in jail. Before my father, with, I fear, some reluctance, bailed me out, Iris had eloped with a lieutenant in the German army and her family had gone sadly back to Zanesville.

This is the truth, and the whole truth, and I plead guilty to every count of the indictment. Thereafter my pulses cooled and I sought the peace of jungles; and the eyes of woman charmed me no more. When I landed at Annandale and opened my portfolio to write *Russian Rivers* my last affair was half a dozen years behind me.

Sobered by these reflections, I left the terrace shortly after eleven and walked through the strip of wood that lay between the house and the lake to the Glenarm pier; and at once matters took a turn that put the love of woman quite out of the reckoning.

CHAPTER III

I MEET MR. REGINALD GILLESPIE

There was a man in our town,
And he was wondrous wise,
He jump'd into a bramble-bush,
And scratch'd out both his eyes;
But when he saw his eyes were out,
With all his might and main
He jump'd into another bush,
And scratch'd them in again.

—*Old Ballad.*

As I neared the boat-house I saw a dark figure sprawled on the veranda and my Japanese boy spoke to me softly. The moon was at full and I drew up in the shadow of the house and waited. Ijima had been with me for several years and was a boy of unusual intelligence. He spoke both English and French admirably, was deft of hand and wise of mind, and I was greatly attached to him. His courage, fidelity and discretion I had tested more than once. He lay quite still on the pier, gazing out upon the lake, and I knew that something unusual had attracted his attention. He spoke to me in a moment, but without turning his head.

"A man has been rowing up and down the shore for an hour. When he came in close here I asked him what he wanted and he rowed away without answering. He is now off there by the school."

"Probably a summer boarder from across the lake."

"Hardly, sir. He came from the direction of the village and acts queerly."

I flung myself down on the pier and crawled out to where Ijima lay. Every pier on the lake had its distinctive lights; the Glenarm sea-mark was—and remains—red, white and green. We lay by the post that bore the three lanterns, and watched the slow movement of a rowboat along the margin of the school grounds. The boat was about a thousand yards from us in a straight line, though farther by the shore; but the moonlight threw the oarsman and his craft into sharp relief against the overhanging bank. St. Agatha's maintains a boathouse for the use of students, and the pier lights—red, white and red—lay beyond the boatman, and he seemed to be drawing slowly toward them. The fussy little steamers that run the errands of the cottagers had made their last rounds and sought their berths for the night, and the lake lay still in the white bath of light.

"Drop one of the canoes into the water," I said; and

I watched the prowling boatman while Ijima crept back to the boat-house. The canoe was launched silently and the boy drove it out to me with a few light strokes. I took the paddle, and we crept close along the shore toward the St. Agatha light, my eyes intent on the boat, which was now drawing in to the school pier. The prowler was feeling his way carefully, as though the region were unfamiliar; but he now landed at the pier and tied his boat. I hung back in the shadows until he had disappeared up the bank, then paddled to the pier, told Ijima to wait, and set off through the wood-path toward St. Agatha's.

Where the wood gave way to the broad lawn that stretched up to the school buildings I caught sight of my quarry. He was strolling along under the beeches to the right of me, and I paused about a hundred feet behind him to watch events. He was a young fellow, not above average height, but compactly built, and stood with his hands thrust boyishly in his pockets, gazing about with frank interest in his surroundings. He was bareheaded and coatless, and his shirt-sleeves were rolled to the elbow. He walked slowly along the edge of the wood, looking off toward the school buildings, and while his manner was furtive there was, too, an air of

unconcern about him and I heard him whistling softly to himself.

He now withdrew into the wood and started off with the apparent intention of gaining a view of St. Agatha's from the front, and I followed. He seemed harmless enough; he might be a curious pilgrim from the summer resort; but I was just now the guardian of St. Agatha's and I intended to learn the stranger's business before I had done with him. He swung well around toward the driveway, threading the flower garden, but hanging always close under the trees, and the mournful whistle would have guided me had not the moon made his every movement perfectly clear. He reached the driveway leading in from the Annandale road without having disclosed any purpose other than that of viewing the vine-clad walls with a tourist's idle interest. The situation had begun to bore me, when the school gardener came running out of the shrubbery, and instantly the young man took to his heels.

"Stop! Stop!" yelled the gardener.

The mysterious young man plunged into the wood and was off like the wind.

"After him, Andy! After him!" I yelled to the Scotchman.

I shouted my own name to reassure him and we both went thumping through the beeches. The stranger would undoubtedly seek to get back to his boat, I reasoned, but he was now headed for the outer wall, and as the wood was free of underbrush he was sprinting away from us at a lively gait. Whoever the young gentleman was, he had no intention of being caught; he darted in and out among the trees with astounding lightness, and I saw in a moment that he was slowly turning away to the right.

"Run for the gate!" I called to the gardener, who was about twenty feet away from me, blowing hard. I prepared to gain on the turn if the young fellow dashed for the lake; and he now led me a pretty chase through the flower garden. He ran with head up and elbows close at his sides, and his light boat shoes made scarcely any sound. He turned once and looked back and, finding that I was alone, began amusing himself with feints and dodges, for no other purpose, I fancied, than to perplex or wind me. There was a little summer-house midway of the garden, and he led me round this till my head swam. By this time I had grown pretty angry, for a foot-race in a school garden struck me with disgust as a childish enterprise, and I bent with new spirit and

drove him away from his giddy circling about the summer-house and beyond the only gate by which he could regain the wood and meadow that lay between the garden and his boat. He turned his head from side to side uneasily, slackening his pace to study the bounds of the garden, and I felt myself gaining.

Ahead of us lay a white picket fence that set off the vegetable garden and marked the lawful bounds of the school. There was no gate and I felt that here the chase must end, and I rejoiced to find myself so near the runner that I heard the quick, soft patter of his shoes on the walk. In a moment I was quite sure that I should have him by the collar, and I had every intention of dealing severely with him for the hard chase he had given me.

But he kept on, the white line of fence clearly outlined beyond him; and then when my hand was almost upon him he rose at the fence, as though sprung from the earth itself, and hung a moment sheer above the sharp line of the fence pickets, his whole figure held almost horizontal, in the fashion of trained high-jumpers, for what seemed an infinite time, as though by some witchery of the moonlight.

I plunged into the fence with a force that knocked

the wind out of me and as I clung panting to the pickets the runner dropped with a crash into the midst of a glass vegetable frame on the farther side. He turned his head, grinned at me sheepishly through the pickets, and gave a kick that set the glass to tinkling. Then he held up his hands in sign of surrender and I saw that they were cut and bleeding. We were both badly blown, and while we regained our wind we stared at each other. He was the first to speak.

"Kicked, bit or stung!" he muttered dolefully; "that saddest of all words, 'stung!' It's as clear as moonlight that I'm badly mussed, not to say cut."

"May I trouble you not to kick out any more of that glass? The gardener will be here in a minute and fish you out."

"Lawsy, what is it? An aquarium, that you fish for me?"

He chuckled softly, but sat perfectly quiet, finding, it seemed, a certain humor in his situation. The gardener came running up and swore in broad Scots at the destruction of the frame. We got over the fence and released our captive, who talked to himself in doleful undertones as we hauled him to his feet amid a renewed clink of glass.

"Gently, gentlemen; behold the night-blooming cereus! Not all the court-plaster in the universe can glue me together again." He gazed ruefully at his slashed arms, and rubbed his legs. "The next time I seek the garden at dewy eve I'll wear my tin suit."

"There won't be any next time for you. What did you run for?"

"Trying to lower my record—it's a mania with me. And as one good question deserves another, may I ask why you didn't tell me there was a glass-works beyond that fence? It wasn't sportsmanlike to hide a murderous hazard like that. But I cleared those pickets with a yard to spare, and broke my record."

"You broke about seven yards of glass," I replied. "It may sober you to know that you are under arrest. The watchman here has a constable's license."

"He also has hair that suggests the common garden or boiled carrot. The tint is not to my liking; yet it is not for me to be captious where the Lord has hardened His heart."

"What is your name?" I demanded.

"Gillespie. R. Gillespie. The 'R' will indicate to you the depth of my humility: I make it a life work to hide the fact that I was baptized Reginald."

"I've been expecting you, Mr. Gillespie, and now I want you to come over to my house and give an account of yourself. I will take charge of this man, Andy. I promise that he shan't set foot here again. And, Andy, you need mention this affair to no one."

"Very good, sir."

He touched his hat respectfully.

"I have business with this person. Say nothing to the ladies at St. Agatha's about him."

He saluted and departed; and with Gillespie walking beside me I started for the boat-landing.

He had wrapped a handkerchief about one arm and I gave him my own for the other. His right arm was bleeding freely below the elbow and I tied it up for him.

"That jump deserved better luck," I volunteered, as he accepted my aid in silence.

"I'm proud to have you like it. Will you kindly tell me who the devil you are?"

"My name is Donovan."

"I don't wholly care for it," he observed mournfully. "Think it over and see if you can't do better. I'm not sure that I'm going to grow fond of you. What's your business with me, anyhow?"

"My business, Mr. Gillespie, is to see that you leave this lake by the first and fastest train."

"Is it possible?" he drawled mockingly.

"More than that," I replied in his own key; "it is decidedly probable."

"Meanwhile, it would be diverting to know where you're taking me. I thought the other chap was the constable."

"I'm taking you to the house of a friend where I'm visiting. I'm going to row you in your boat. It's only a short distance; and when we get there I shall have something to say to you."

He made no reply, but got into the boat without ado. He found a light flannel coat and I flung it over his shoulders and pulled for Glenarm pier, telling the Japanese boy to follow with the canoe. I turned over in my mind the few items of information that I had gained from Miss Pat and her niece touching the young man who was now my prisoner, and found that I knew little enough about him. He was the unwelcome and annoying suitor of Miss Helen Holbrook, and I had caught him prowling about St. Agatha's in a manner that was indefensible.

He sat huddled in the stern, nursing his swathed arms

on his knees and whistling dolefully. The lake was a broad pool of silver. Save for the soft splash of Ijima's paddle behind me and the slight wash of water on the near shore, silence possessed the world. Gillespie looked about with some curiosity, but said nothing, and when I drove the boat to the Glenarm landing he crawled out and followed me through the wood without a word.

I flashed on the lights in the library and after a short inspection of his wounds we went to my room and found sponges, plasters and ointments in the family medicine chest and cared for his injuries.

"There's no honor in tumbling into a greenhouse, but such is R. Gillespie's luck. My shins look like scarlet fever, and without sound legs a man's better dead."

"Your legs seem to have got you into trouble; don't mourn the loss of them!" And I twisted a bandage under his left knee-cap where the glass had cut savagely.

"It's my poor wits, if we must fix the blame. It's an awful thing, sir, to be born with weak intellectuals. As man's legs carry him on orders from his head, there lies the seat of the difficulty. A weak mind, obedient legs, and there you go, plump into the bosom of a blooming asparagus bed, and the enemy lays violent hands on you. If you put any more of that sting-y pudding on that cut

I shall undoubtedly hit you, Mr. Donovan. Ah, thank you, thank you so much!"

As I finished with the vaseline he lay back on the couch and sighed deeply and I rose and sent Ijima away with the basin and towels.

"Will you drink? There are twelve kinds of whisky—"

"My dear Mr. Donovan, the thought of strong drink saddens me. Such poor wits as mine are not helped by alcoholic stimulants. I was drunk once—beautifully, marvelously, nobly drunk, so that antiquity came up to date with the thud of a motor-car hitting an orphan asylum; and I saw Julius Cæsar driving a chariot up Fifth Avenue and Cromwell poised on one foot on the shorter spire of St. Patrick's Cathedral. Are you aware, my dear sir, that one of those spires is shorter than the other?"

"I certainly am not," I replied bluntly, wondering what species of madman I had on my hands.

"It's a fact, confided to me by a prominent engineer of New York, who has studied those spires daily since they were put up. He told me that when he had surrounded five high-balls the north spire was higher; but that the sixth tumblerful always raised the south spire

about eleven feet above it. Now, wouldn't that doddle you?"

"It would, Mr. Gillespie; but may I ask you to cut out this rot—"

"My dear Mr. Donovan, it's indelicate of you to speak of cutting anything—and me with my legs. But I'm at your service. You have tended my grievous wounds like a gentleman and now do you wish me to unfold my past, present and future?"

"I want you to get out of this and be quick about it. Your biography doesn't amuse me; I caught you prowling disgracefully about St. Agatha's. Two ladies are domiciled there who came here to escape your annoying attentions. Those ladies were put in my charge by an old friend, and I don't propose to stand any nonsense from you, Mr. Gillespie. You seem to be at least half sane—"

Reginald Gillespie raised himself on the couch and grinned joyously.

"Thank you—thank you for that word! That's just twice as high as anybody ever rated me before."

"I was trying to be generous," I said. "There's a point at which I begin to be bored, and when that's reached I'm likely to grow quarrelsome. Are there any

moments of the day or night when you are less a fool than others?"

"Well, Donovan, I've often speculated about that, and my conclusion is that my mind is at its best when I'm asleep and enjoying a nightmare. I find the Welsh rabbit most stimulating to my thought voltage. Then I am, you may say, detached from myself; another mind not my own is building towers and palaces, and spiders as large as the far-famed though extinct ichthyosaurus are waltzing on the moon. Then, I have sometimes thought, my intellectual parts are most intelligently employed."

"I may well believe you," I declared with asperity. "Now I hope I can pound it into you in some way that your presence in this neighborhood is offensive—to me—personally."

He stared at the ceiling, silent, imperturbable.

"And I'm going to give you safe conduct through the lines—or if necessary I'll buy your ticket and start you for New York. And if there's an atom of honor in you, you'll go peaceably and not publish the fact that you know the whereabouts of these ladies."

He reflected gravely for a moment.

"I think," he said, "that on the whole that's a fair

proposition. But you seem to have the impression that I wish to annoy these ladies."

"You don't for a moment imagine that you are likely to entertain them, do you? You haven't got the idea that you are necessary to their happiness, have you?"

He raised himself on his elbow with some difficulty; flinched as he tried to make himself comfortable and began:

"The trouble with Miss Pat is—"

"There is no trouble with Miss Pat," I snapped.

"The trouble between Miss Pat and me is the same old trouble of the buttons," he remarked dolorously.

"Buttons, you idiot?"

"Quite so. Buttons, just plain every-day buttons; buttons for buttoning purposes. Now I shall be grateful to you if you will refrain from saying

> "'Button, button,
> Who's got the button?'"

The fellow was undoubtedly mad. I looked about for a weapon; but he went on gravely.

"What does the name Gillespie mean? Of what is it the sign and symbol wherever man hides his nakedness? Button, button, who'll buy my buttons? It can't be pos-

sible that you never heard of the Gillespie buttons? Where have you lived, my dear sir?"

"Will you please stop talking rot and explain what you want here?" I demanded with growing heat.

"That, my dear sir, is exactly what I'm doing. I'm a suitor for the hand of Miss Patricia's niece. Miss Patricia scorns me; she says I'm a mere child of the Philistine rich and declines an alliance without thanks, if you must know the truth. And it's all on account of the fact, shameful enough I admit, that my father died and left me a large and prosperous button factory."

"Why don't you give the infernal thing away—sell it out to a trust—"

"Ah! ah!"—and he raised himself again and pointed a bandaged hand at me. "I see that you are a man of penetration! You have a keen notion of business! You anticipate me! I did sell the infernal thing to a trust, but there was no shaking it! They made me president of the combination, and I control more buttons than any other living man! My dear sir, I dictate the button prices of the world. I can tell you to a nicety how many buttons are swallowed annually by the babies of the universe. But I hope, sir, that I use my power wisely and without oppressing the people."

Gillespie lay on his back, wrapped in my dressing-gown, his knees raised, his bandaged arms folded across his chest. Since bringing him into the house I had studied him carefully and, I must confess, with increasing mystification. He was splendidly put up, the best-muscled man I had ever seen who was not a professional athlete. His forearms and clean-shaven face were brown from prolonged tanning by the sun, but otherwise his skin was the pink and white of a healthy baby. His short light hair was combed smoothly away from a broad forehead; his blue eyes were perfectly steady—they even invited and held scrutiny; when he was not speaking he closed his lips tightly. He appeared in nowise annoyed by his predicament; the house itself seemed to have no interest for him, and he accepted my ministrations in murmurs of well-bred gratitude.

I half believed the fellow to be amusing himself at my expense; but he met my eyes calmly. If I had not caught a lunatic I had certainly captured an odd specimen of humanity. He was the picture of wholesome living and sound health; but he talked like a fool. The idea of a young woman like Helen Holbrook giving two thoughts to a silly youngster like this was preposterous, and my heart hardened against him.

"You are flippant, Mr. Gillespie, and my errand with you is serious. There are places in this house where I could lock you up and you would never see your button factory again. You seem to have had some education—"

"The word does me great honor, Donovan. They chucked me from Yale in my junior year. Why, you may ask? Well, it happened this way: You know Rooney, the Bellefontaine Cyclone? He struck New Haven with a vaudeville outfit, giving boxing exhibitions, poking the bag and that sort of fake. At every town they invited the local sports to dig up their brightest amateur middle-weight and put him against the Cyclone for five rounds. I brushed my hair the wrong way for a disguise and went against him."

"And got smashed for your trouble, I hope," I interrupted.

"No. The boys in the gallery cheered so that they fussed him, and he thought I was fruit. We shook hands, and he turned his head to snarl at the applause, and, seeing an opening, I smashed him a hot clip in the chin, and he tumbled backward and broke the ring rope. I vaulted the orchestra and bolted, and when the boys finally found me I was over near Waterbury under a barn. Eli wouldn't stand for it, and back I went to the

button factory; and here I am, sir, by the grace of God, an ignorant man."

He lay blinking as though saddened by his recollections, and I turned away and paced the floor. When I glanced at him again he was still staring soberly at the wall.

"How did you find your way here, Gillespie?" I demanded.

"I suppose I ought to explain that," he replied. I waited while he reflected for a moment. He seemed to be quite serious, and his brows wrinkled as he pondered.

"I guessed it about half; and for the rest, I followed the heaven-kissing stack of trunks."

He glanced at me quickly, as though anxious to see how I received his words.

"Have you seen anything of Henry Holbrook in your travels? Be careful now; I want the truth."

"I certainly have not. I hope you don't think—" Gillespie hesitated.

"It's not a matter for thinking or guessing; I've got to know."

"On my honor I have not seen him, and I have no idea where he is."

I had thrown myself into a chair beside the couch and

lighted my pipe. My captive troubled me. It seemed odd that he had found the abiding-place of the two women; and if he had succeeded so quickly, why might not Henry Holbrook have equal luck?

"You probably know this troublesome brother well," I ventured.

"Yes; as well as a man of my age can know an older man. My father's place at Stamford adjoined the Holbrook estate. Henry and Arthur Holbrook married sisters; both women died long ago, I believe; but the brothers had a business row and went to smash. Arthur embezzled, forged, and so on, and took to the altitudinous timber, and Henry has been busy ever since trying to pluck his sister. He's wild on the subject of his wrongs—ruined by his own brother, deprived of his inheritance by his sister and abandoned by his only child. There wasn't much to Arthur Holbrook; Henry was the genius, but after the bank went to the bad he sought the consolations of rum. He and Henry married the Hartridge twins who were the reigning Baltimore belles in the early eighties—so runneth the chronicle. But I gossip, my dear sir; I gossip, which is against my principles. Even the humble button king of Strawberry Hill must draw the line."

When Ijima brought in a plate of sandwiches he took one gingerly in his swathed hand, regarded it with cool inquiry, and as he munched it, remarked upon sandwiches in general as though they were botanical specimens that were usually discussed and analyzed in a scientific spirit.

"The sandwich," he began, "not unhappily expresses one of the saddest traits of our American life. I need hardly refer to our deplorable national habit of hiding our shame under a blithe and misleading exterior. Now this article, provided by your generous hospitality for a poor prisoner of war, contains a bit of the breast of some fowl, presumably chicken—we will concede that it is chicken—taken from rather too near the bone to be wholly palatable. Chicken sandwiches in some parts of the world are rather coarsely marked, for purposes of identification, with pin-feathers. You may covet no nobler fame than that of creator of the Flying Sandwich of Annandale. Yet the feathered sandwich, though more picturesque, points rather too directly to the strutting lords of the barn-yard. A sandwich that is decorated like a fall bonnet, that suggests, we will say, the milliner's window—or the plumed knights of sounding war—"

With a little sigh, a slow relaxation of muscles, Mr. Gillespie slept: I locked the doors, put out the lights, and tumbled into my own bed as the chapel clock chimed two.

In the disturbed affairs of the night the blinds had not been drawn, and I woke at six to find the room flooded with light and my prisoner gone. The doors were locked as I had left them. Mr. Gillespie had departed by the window, dropping from a little balcony to the terrace beneath. I rang for Ijima and sent him to the pier; and before I had finished shaving, the boy was back, and reported Gillespie's boat still at the pier, but one of the canoes missing. It was clear that in the sorry plight of his arms Gillespie had preferred paddling to rowing. Beneath my watch on the writing-table I found a sheet of note-paper on which was scrawled:

DEAR OLD MAN—I am having one of those nightmares I mentioned in our delightful conversation. I feel that I am about to walk in my sleep. As my flannels are a trifle bluggy, pardon loss of your dressing-gown. Yours,

R. G.

P. S.—I am willing to pay for the glass and medical attendance; but I want a rebate for that third sandwich. It really tickled too harshly as it went down. Very likely this accounts for my somnambulism.

G.

When I had dressed and had my coffee I locked my old portfolio and tossed it into the bottom of my trunk. Something told me that for a while, at least, I should have other occupation than contributing to the literature of Russian geography.

CHAPTER IV

I EXPLORE TIPPECANOE CREEK

The woodland silence, one time stirred
By the soft pathos of some passing bird,
  Is not the same it was before.
The spot where once, unseen, a flower
Has held its fragile chalice to the shower,
  Is different for evermore.
    Unheard, unseen
    A spell has been!
—*Thomas Bailey Aldrich.*

My first care was to find the gardener of St. Agatha's and renew his pledge of silence of the night before; and then I sought the ladies, to make sure that they had not been disturbed by my collision with Gillespie. Miss Pat and Helen were in Sister Theresa's pretty sitting-room, through whose windows the morning wind blew fresh and cool. Miss Pat was sewing—her dear hands, I found, were always busy—while Helen read to her.

"This is a day for the open! You must certainly venture forth!" I began cheerily. "You see, Father Stoddard chose well; this is the most peaceful place on the

map. Let us begin with a drive at six, when the sun is low; or maybe you would prefer a little run in the launch."

They exchanged glances.

"I think it would be all right, Aunt Pat," said Helen.

"Perhaps we should wait another day. We must take no chances; the relief of being free is too blessed to throw away. I really slept through the night—I can't tell you what a boon that is!"

"Why, Sister Margaret had to call us both at eight!" exclaimed Helen. "That is almost too wonderful for belief." She sat in a low, deep, wicker chair, with her arms folded upon her book. She wore a short blue skirt and white waist, with a red scarf knotted at her throat and a ribbon of like color in her hair.

"Oh, the nights here are tranquillity itself! Now, as to the drive—"

"Let us wait another day, Mr. Donovan. I feel that we must make assurance doubly sure," said Miss Pat; and this, of course, was final.

It was clear that the capture of Gillespie had not disturbed the slumber of St. Agatha's. My conscience pricked me a trifle at leaving them so ignorantly contented; but Gillespie's appearance was hardly a menace,

and though I had pledged myself to warn Helen Holbrook at the first sign of trouble, I determined to deal with him on my own account. He was only an infatuated fool, and I was capable, I hoped, of disposing of his case without taking any one into my confidence. But first it was my urgent business to find him.

I got out the launch and crossed the lake to the summer colony and began my search by asking for Gillespie at the casino, but found that his name was unknown. I lounged about until lunch-time, visited the golf course that lay on a bit of upland beyond the cottages and watched the players until satisfied that Gillespie was not among them, then I went home for luncheon.

A man with bandaged arms, and clad in a dressing-gown, can not go far without attracting attention; and I was not in the least discouraged by my fruitless search. I have spent a considerable part of my life in the engaging occupation of looking for men who were hard to find, and as I smoked my cigar on the shady terrace and waited for Ijima to replenish the launch's tank, I felt confident that before night I should have an understanding with Gillespie if he were still in the neighborhood of Annandale.

The midday was warm, but I cooled my eyes on the

deep shadows of the wood, through which at intervals I saw white sails flash on the lake. All bird-song was hushed, but a woodpecker on a dead sycamore hammered away for dear life. The bobbing of his red head must have exercised some hypnotic spell, for I slept a few minutes, and dreamed that the woodpecker had bored a hole in my forehead. When I roused it was with a start that sent my pipe clattering to the stone terrace floor. A man who has ever camped or hunted or been hunted—and I have known all three experiences—always scrutinizes the horizons when he wakes, and I found myself staring into the wood. As my eyes sought remembered landmarks here and there, I saw a man dressed as a common sailor skulking toward the boat-house several hundred yards away. He was evidently following the school wall to escape observation, and I rose and stepped closer to the balustrade to watch his movements. In a moment he came out into a little open space wherein stood a stone tower where water was stored for the house, and he paused here and gazed about him curiously. I picked up a field-glass from a little table near by and caught sight of a swarthy foreign face under a soft felt hat. He passed the tower and walked on toward the lake, and I dropped over the balustrade and followed him.

The Japanese boy was still at work on the launch, and, hearing a step on the pier planking, he glanced up, then rose and asked the stranger his business.

The man shook his head.

"If you have business it must be at the house; the road is in the other direction," and Ijima pointed to the wood, but the stranger remained stubbornly on the edge of the pier. I now stepped out of the wood and walked down to the pier.

"What do you want here?" I demanded sharply.

The man touched his hat, smiled, and shook his head. The broad hand he lifted in salute was that of a laborer, and its brown back was tattooed. He belonged, I judged, to one of the dark Mediterranean races, and I tried him in Italian.

"These are private grounds; you will do well to leave here very quickly," I said.

I saw his eyes light as I spoke the words slowly and distinctly, but he waited until I had finished, then shook his head.

I was sure he had understood, but as I addressed him again, ordering him from the premises, he continued to shake his head and grin foolishly. Then I pointed toward the road.

"Go; and it will be best for you not to come here again!" I said, and, after saluting, he walked slowly away into the wood, with a sort of dogged insolence in his slightly swaying gait. At a nod from me Ijima stole after him while I waited, and in a few minutes the boy came back and reported that the man had passed the house and left the grounds by the carriage entrance, turning toward Annandale.

With my mind on Gillespie I put off in the launch, determined to study the lake geography. A mile from the pier I looked back and saw, rising above the green wood, the gray lines of Glenarm house; and farther west the miniature tower of the little chapel of St. Agatha's thrust itself through the trees. To the east lay Annandale village; to the northwest the summer colony of Port Annandale. I swung the boat toward the unknown north of this pretty lake, watching meanwhile its social marine—if I may use such a term—with new interest. Several smart sail-boats lounged before the wind—more ambitious craft than I imagined these waters boasted; the lake "tramps" on their ceaseless errands to and from the village whistled noisily; we passed a boy and girl in a canoe—a thing so pretty and graceful and so clean-cut in its workmanship that I turned to

look after it. The girl was lazily plying the paddle; the boy, supported by a wealth of gay cushions, was thrumming a guitar. They glared at me resentfully as their cockle-shell wobbled in the wash of the launch.

"That's a better canoe than we own, Ijima. I should like to pick up one as good."

"There are others like it on the lake. Hartridge is the maker. His shop is over there somewhere," and Ijima waved his hand toward the north. "A boy told me at the Annandale dock that those canoes are famous all over this country."

"Then we must certainly have one. We could have used one of those things in Russia."

The shores grew narrower and more irregular as we proceeded, and we saw only at rare intervals any signs of life. A heavy forest lay at either hand, broken now and then by rough meadows. Just beyond a sharp curve a new vista opened before us, and I was astonished to see a small wooded island ahead of us. Beyond it lay the second lake, linked to the main body of Annandale by a narrow strait.

"I did not know there was anything so good on the lake, Ijima. I wonder what they call this?"

He reached into a locker and drew out a tin tube.

"This is a map, sir. I think they call this Battle Orchard."

"That's not bad, either. I don't see the orchard or the battle, but no doubt they have both been here." I was more and more pleased.

I gave him the wheel and took the map, which proved to be a careful chart of the lake, made, I judged, by my friend Glenarm for his own amusement. We passed slowly around the island, which was not more than twenty acres in extent, with an abrupt bank on the east and a low pebbly shore on the west, and a body of heavy timber rising darkly in the center. The shore of the mainland sloped upward here in the tender green of young corn. I have, I hope, a soul for landscape, and the soft bubble of water, the lush reeds in the shallows, the rapidly moving panorama of field and forest, the glimpses of wild flowers, and the arched blue above, were restful to mind and heart. It seemed shameful that the whole world was not afloat; then, as I reflected that another boat in these tranquil waters would be an impertinence that I should resent, I was aware that I had been thinking of Helen Holbrook all the while; and the thought of this irritated me so that I criticized Ijima most unjustly for running the launch close to a boulder

that rose like a miniature Gibraltar near the shadowy shore we were skirting.

We gained the ultimate line of the lower lake, and followed the shore in search of its outlet, pleasingly set down on the map as Tippecanoe Creek, which ran off and joined somewhere a river of like name.

"We'll cruise here a bit and see if we can find the creek," I said, filling my pipe.

Tippecanoe! Its etymology is not in books, but goes back to the first star that ever saw itself in running water; its cadence is that of a boat gliding over ripples; its syllables flow as liquidly as a woodland spring lingering in delight over shining pebbles. The canoe alone, of all things fashioned to carry man, has a soul—and it is a soul at once obedient and perverse. And now that I had discovered the name Tippecanoe, it seemed to murmur itself from the little waves we sent singing into the reeds. My delight in it was so great, it rang in my head so insistently, that I should have missed the creek with the golden name if Ijima had not called my attention to its gathering current, that now drew us, like a tide. The lake's waters ran away, like a truant child, through a woody cleft, and in a moment we were as clean quit of the lake as though it did not exist.

After a few rods the creek began to twist and turn as though with the intention of making the voyager earn his way. In the narrow channel the beat of our engine rang from the shores rebukingly, and soon, as a punishment for disturbing the peace of the little stream, we grounded on a sand-bar.

"This seems to be the head of navigation, Ijima. I believe this creek was made for canoes, not battleships."

Between us we got the launch off, and I landed on a convenient log and crawled up the bank to observe the country. I followed a stake-and-rider fence half hidden in vines of various sorts, and tramped along the bank, with the creek still singing its tortuous way below at my right hand. It was late, and long shadows now fell across the world; but every new turn in the creek tempted me, and the sharp scratch of brambles did not deter me from going on. Soon the rail fence gave way to barbed wire; the path broadened and the underbrush was neatly cut away. Within lay a small vegetable garden, carefully tilled; and farther on I saw a dark green cottage almost shut in by beeches. The path dipped sharply down and away from the cottage, and a moment later I had lost sight of it; but below, at the edge of the

creek, stood a long house-boat with an extended platform or deck on the waterside.

I can still feel, as I recall the day and hour, the utter peace of the scene when first I came upon that secluded spot: the melodious flow of the creek beneath; the flutter of homing wings; even the hum of insects in the sweet, thymy air. Then a step farther and I came to a gate which opened on a flight of steps that led to the house beneath; and through the intervening tangle I saw a man sprawled at ease in a steamer chair on the deck, his arms under his head. As I watched him he sighed and turned restlessly, and I caught a glimpse of close-trimmed beard and short, thin, slightly gray hair.

The place was clearly the summer home of a city man in search of quiet, and I was turning away, when suddenly a woman's voice rang out clearly from the bank.

"Hello the house-boat!"

"Yes; I'm here!" answered the man below.

"Come on, father; I've been looking for you everywhere," called the voice again.

"Oh, it's too bad you've been waiting," he answered.

"Of course I've been waiting!" she flung back, and he jumped up and ran toward her. Then down the steps flashed Helen Holbrook in white. She paused at the

gate an instant before continuing her descent to the creek, bending her head as she sought the remaining steps. Her dark hair and clear profile trembled a moment in the summer dusk; then she ran past me and disappeared below.

"Daddy, you dear old fraud, I thought you were coming to meet me on the ridge!"

I turned and groped my way along the darkening path. My heart was thumping wildly and my forehead was wet with perspiration.

Ijima stood on the bank lighting his lantern, and I flung myself into the launch and bade him run for home.

We were soon crossing the lake. I lay back on the cushions and gazed up at the bright roof of stars. Before I reached Glenarm the shock of finding Helen Holbrook in friendly communication with her father had passed, and I sat down to dinner at nine o'clock with a sound appetite.

CHAPTER V

A FIGHT ON A HOUSE-BOAT

The best composition and temperature is, to have openness in fame and opinion, secrecy in habit, dissimulation in seasonable use, and a power to feign, if there be no remedy.
—*Francis Bacon.*

At ten o'clock I called for a horse and rode out into the night, turning into the country with the intention of following the lake-road to the region I had explored in the launch a few hours before. All was dark at St. Agatha's as I passed. No doubt Helen Holbrook had returned in due course from her visit to her father and, after accounting plausibly to her aunt for her absence, was sleeping the sleep of the just. Now that I thought of the matter in all its bearings, I accused myself for not having gone directly to St. Agatha's from the lonely house on Tippecanoe Creek and waited for her there, demanding an explanation of her perfidy. She was treating Miss Pat infamously: that was plain; and yet in my heart I was excusing and defending her. A family

row about money was ugly at best; and an unfortunate —even criminal—father may still have some claim on his child.

Then, as against such reasoning, the vision of Miss Pat rose before me—and I felt whatever chivalry there is in me arouse with a rattle of spears. Paul Stoddard, in committing that dear old gentlewoman to my care, had not asked me to fall in love with her niece; so, impatient to be thus swayed between two inclinations, I chirruped to the horse and galloped swiftly over the silent white road.

I had learned from the Glenarm stable-boys that it was several miles overland to the Tippecanoe. A Sabbath quiet lay upon the world, and I seemed to be the only person abroad. I rode at a sharp pace through the cool air, rushing by heavy woodlands and broad fields, with an occasional farm-house rising somberly in the moonlight. The road turned gradually, following the line of the lake which now flashed out and then was lost again behind the forest. There is nothing like a gallop to shake the nonsense out of a man, and my spirits rose as the miles sped by. The village of Tippecanoe lay off somewhere in this direction, as guide-posts several times gave warning; and my study of the map

on the launch had given me a good idea of the whole region. What I sought was the front entrance of the green cottage above the house-boat by the creek, and when, far beyond Port Annandale, the road turned abruptly away from the lake, I took my bearings and dismounted and tied my horse in a strip of unfenced woodland.

The whole region was very lonely, and now that the beat of hoofs no longer rang in my ears the quiet was oppressive. I struck through the wood and found the creek, and the path beside it. The little stream was still murmuring its own name musically, with perhaps a softer note in deference to the night; and following the path carefully I came in a few minutes to the steps that linked the cottage with the house-boat at the creek's edge. It was just there that I had seen Helen Holbrook, and I stood quite still recalling this, and making sure that she had come down those steps in that quiet out-of-the-way corner of the world, to keep tryst with her father. The story-and-a-half cottage was covered with vines and close-wrapped in shrubbery. I followed a garden walk that wound among bits of lawn and flower-beds until I came to a tall cedar hedge that cut the place off from the road. A semicircle of taller pines

within shut the cottage off completely from the highway. I crawled through the cedars and walked along slowly to the gate, near which a post supported a sign-board. I struck a match and read:

RED GATE
R. Hartridge,
Canoe-Maker,
Tippecanoe, Indiana.

This, then, was the home of the canoe-maker mentioned by Ijima. I found his name repeated on the rural delivery mail-box affixed to the sign-post. Henry Holbrook was probably a boarder at the house—it required no great deductive powers to fathom that. I stole back through the hedge and down to the house-boat. The moon was coming up over the eastern wood, and the stars were beautifully clear. I walked the length of the platform, which was provided with a railing on the waterside, with growing curiosity. Several canoes, carefully covered with tarpaulins, lay about the deck, and chairs were drawn up close to the long, low house in shipshape fashion. If this house-boat was the canoe-maker's shop he had chosen a secluded and picturesque spot for it.

As I leaned against the rail studying the lines of the

house, I heard suddenly the creak of an oar-lock in the stream behind, and then low voices talking. The deep night silence was so profound that any sound was doubly emphasized, and I peered out upon the water, at once alert and interested. I saw a dark shadow in the creek as the boat drew nearer, and heard words spoken sharply as though in command. I drew back against the house and waited. Possibly the canoe-maker had been abroad, or more likely Henry Holbrook had gone forth upon some mischief, and my mind flew at once to the two women at St. Agatha's, one of whom at least was still under my protection. The boat approached furtively, and I heard now very distinctly words spoken in Italian:

"Have a care; climb up with the rope and I'll follow."

Then the boat touched the platform lightly and a second later a man climbed nimbly up the side. His companion followed, and they tied their boat to the railing. They paused now to reconnoiter—so close to me that I could have touched them with my hands—and engaged in a colloquy. The taller man gave directions, the other replying in monosyllables to show that he understood.

"Go to the side porch of the cottage, and knock. When the man comes to the door tell him that you are

the chauffeur from an automobile that has broken down in the road, and that you want help for a woman who has been hurt."

"Yes, sir."

"Then—you know the rest."

"The knife—it shall be done."

I have made it the rule of my life, against much painful experience and the admonitions of many philosophers, to act first and reason afterwards. And here it was a case of two to one. The men began stealing across the deck toward the steps that led up to the cottage, and with rather more zeal than judgment I took a step after them, and clumsily kicked over a chair that fell clattering wildly. Both men leaped toward the rail at the sound, and I flattened myself against the house to await developments. The silence was again complete.

"A chair blew over," remarked one of the voices.

"There is no wind," replied the other, the one I recognized as belonging to the leader.

"See what you can find—and have a care!"

The speaker went to the rail and began fumbling with the rope. The other, I realized, was slipping quite noiselessly along the smooth planking toward me, his bent body faintly silhouetted in the moonlight. I knew

that I could hardly be distinguishable from the long line of the house, and I had the additional advantage of knowing their strength, while I was still an unknown quantity to them. The men would assume that I was either Hartridge, the boat-maker, or Henry Holbrook, one of whom they had come to kill, and there is, as every one knows, little honor in being the victim of mistaken identity. I heard the man's hand scratching along the wall as he advanced cautiously; there was no doubt but that he would discover me in another moment; so I resolved to take the initiative and give battle.

My finger-tips touched the back of one of the folded camp-chairs that rested against the house, and I slowly clasped it. I saw the leader still standing by the rail, the rope in his hand. His accomplice was so close that I could hear his quick breathing, and something in his dimly outlined crouching figure was familiar. Then it flashed over me that he was the dark sailor I had ordered from Glenarm that afternoon.

He was now within arm's length of me and I jumped out, swung the chair high and brought it down with a crash on his head. The force of the blow carried me forward and jerked the chair out of my grasp; and down we went with a mighty thump. I felt the Italian's body

slip and twist lithely under me as I tried to clasp his arms. He struggled fiercely to free himself, and I felt the point of a knife prick my left wrist sharply as I sought to hold his right arm to the deck. His muscles were like iron, and I had no wish to let him clasp me in his short thick arms; nor did the idea of being struck with a knife cheer me greatly in that first moment of the fight.

My main business was to keep free of the knife. He was slowly lifting me on his knees, while I gripped his arm with both hands. The other man had dropped into the boat and was watching us across the rail.

"Make haste, Giuseppe!" he called impatiently, and I laughed a little, either at his confidence in the outcome or at his care for his own security; and my courage rose to find that I had only one to reckon with. I bent grimly to the task of holding the Italian's right arm to the deck, with my left hand on his shoulder and my right fastened to his wrist, he meanwhile choking me very prettily with his free hand. His knees were slowly raising me and crowding me higher on his chest and the big rough hand on my throat tightened. I suddenly slipped my left hand down to where my right gripped his wrist and wrenched it sharply. His fingers relaxed,

and when I repeated the twist the knife rattled on the deck.

I broke away and leaped for the rail with some idea of jumping into the creek and swimming for it; and then the man in the boat let go twice with a revolver, the echoing explosions roaring over the still creek with the sound of saluting battleships.

"Hold on to that man—hold him!" he shouted from below. I heard the Italian scraping about on the deck for his knife as I dodged round the house. I missed the steps in the dark and scrambled for them wildly, found them and was dashing for the path before the last echo of the shot had died away down the little valley. I was satisfied to let things stand as they were, and leave Henry Holbrook and the canoe-maker to defend their own lives and property. Then, when I was about midway of the steps, a man plunged down from the garden and had me by the collar and on my back before I knew what had happened.

There was an instant's silence in which I heard angry voices from the house-boat. My new assailant listened, too, and I felt his grasp on me tighten, though I was well winded and tame enough.

I heard the boat strike the platform sharply as the sec-

ond man jumped into it; then for an instant silence again held the valley.

My captor seemed to dismiss the retreating boat, and poking a pistol into my ribs gave me his attention.

"Climb up these steps, and do as I tell you. If you run, I will shoot you like a dog."

"There's a mistake—" I began chokingly, for the Italian had almost strangled me and my lungs were as empty as a spent bellows.

"That will do. Climb!" He stuck the revolver into my back and up I went and through the garden toward the cottage. A door opening on the veranda was slightly ajar, and I was thrust forward none too gently into a lighted room.

My captor and I studied each other attentively for half a minute. He was beyond question the man whom Helen Holbrook had sought at the house-boat in the summer dusk. Who Hartridge was did not matter; it was evident that Holbrook was quite at home in the canoe-maker's house, and that he had no intention of calling any one else into our affairs. He had undoubtedly heard the revolver shots below and rushed from the cottage to investigate; and, meeting me in full flight, he had naturally taken it for granted that I was involved in

some designs on himself. As he leaned against a table by the door his grave blue eyes scrutinized me with mingled indignation and interest. He wore white duck trousers turned up over tan shoes, and a gray outing shirt with a blue scarf knotted under its soft collar.

I seemed to puzzle him, and his gaze swept me from head to foot several times before he spoke. Then his eyes flashed angrily and he took a step toward me.

"Who in the devil are you and what do you want?"

"My name is Donovan, and I don't want anything except to get home."

"Where do you come from at this hour of the night?"

"I am spending the summer at Mr. Glenarm's place near Annandale."

"That's rather unlikely; Mr. Glenarm is abroad. What were you doing down there on the creek?"

"I wasn't doing anything until two men came along to kill you and I mixed up with them and got badly mussed for my trouble."

He eyed me with a new interest.

"They came to kill me, did they? You tell a good story, Mr. Donovan."

"Quite so. I was standing on the deck of the house-boat or whatever it is—"

"Where you had no business to be—"

"Granted. I had no business to be there; but I was there and came near getting killed for my impertinence, as I have told you. Those fellows rowed up from the direction of the lake. One of them told the other to call you to your door on the pretense of summoning aid for a broken motor-car off there in the road. Then he was to stab you. The assassin was an Italian. His employer spoke to him in that tongue. I happen to be acquainted with it."

"You are a very accomplished person," he observed dryly.

He walked up to me and felt my pockets.

"Who fired that pistol?"

"The man in charge of the expedition. The Italian was trying to knife me on the deck, and I broke away from him and ran. His employer had gone back to the boat for safety and he took a crack at me as I ran across the platform. It's not the fault of either that I'm not quite out of business."

An inner door back of me creaked slightly. My captor swung round at the sound.

"O Rosalind! It's all right. A gentleman here lost his way and I'm giving him his bearings."

The door closed gently, and I heard the sound of steps retreating through the cottage. I noted the anxious look in Holbrook's face as he waited for the sounds to cease; then he addressed me again.

"Mr. Donovan, this is a quiet neighborhood, and I am a peaceable man, whose worldly goods could tempt no one. There were undoubtedly others besides yourself down there at the creek, for one man couldn't have made all that row; but as you are the one I caught I must deal with you. But you have protested too much; the idea of Italian bandits on Tippecanoe Creek is creditable to your imagination, but it doesn't appeal to my common sense. I don't know about your being a guest at Glenarm House—even that is flimsy. A guest in the absence of the host is just a little too fanciful. I'm strongly disposed to take you to the calaboose at Tippecanoe village."

Having been in jail several times in different parts of the world I was not anxious to add to my experiences in that direction. Moreover, I had come to this lonely house on the Tippecanoe to gain information touching the movements of Henry Holbrook, and I did not relish the idea of being thrown into a country jail by him. I resolved to meet the situation boldly.

"You seem to accept my word reluctantly, even after I have saved you from being struck down at your own door. Now I will be frank with you. I had a purpose in coming here—"

He stepped back and folded his arms.

"Yes, I thought so." He looked about uneasily, before his eyes met mine. His hands beat nervously on his sleeves as he waited, and I resolved to bring matters to an issue by speaking his name.

"I know who you are, Mr. Holbrook."

His hands went into his pockets again, and he stepped back and laughed.

"You are a remarkably bad guesser, Mr. Donovan. If you had visited me by daylight instead of coming like a thief at midnight, you would have saved yourself much trouble. My name is displayed over the outer gate. I am Robert Hartridge, a canoe-maker."

He spoke the name carelessly, his manner and tone implying that there could be no debating the subject. I was prepared for evasion but not for this cool denial of his identity.

"But this afternoon, Mr. Holbrook, I chanced to follow the creek to this point and I saw—"

"You probably saw that house-boat down there, that

is my shop. As I tell you, I am a maker of canoes. They have, I hope, some reputation—honest hand-work; and my output is limited. I shall be deeply chagrined if you have never heard of the Hartridge canoe."

He shook his head in mock grief, walked to a cabarette and took up a pipe and filled it. He was carrying off the situation well; but his coolness angered me.

"Mr. Hartridge, I am sorry that I must believe that heretofore you have been known as Holbrook. The fact was clenched for me this afternoon, quite late, as I stood in the path below here. I heard quite distinctly a young woman call you father."

"So? Then you're an eavesdropper as well as a trespasser!"—and the man laughed.

"We will admit that I am both," I flared angrily.

"You are considerate, Mr. Donovan!"

"The young woman who called you father and whom you answered from the deck of the house-boat is a person I know."

"The devil!"

He calmly puffed his pipe, holding the bowl in his fingers, his idle hand thrust into his trousers pocket.

"It was Miss Helen Holbrook that I saw here, Mr. Hartridge."

He started, then recovered himself and peered into the pipe bowl for a second; then looked at me with an amused smile on his face.

"You certainly have a wonderful imagination. The person you saw, if you saw any one on your visit to these premises to-day, was my daughter, Rosalind Hartridge. Where do you think you knew her, Mr. Donovan?"

"I saw her this morning, at St. Agatha's School. I not only saw her, but I talked with her, and I am neither deaf nor blind."

He pursed his lips and studied me, with his head slightly tilted to one side, in a cool fashion that I did not like.

"Rather an odd place to have met this Miss—what name, did you say?—Miss Helen Holbrook;—a closed school-house, and that sort of thing."

"You may ease your mind on that point; she was with your sister, her aunt, Mr. Holbrook; and I want you to understand that your following Miss Patricia Holbrook here is infamous and that I have no other business but to protect her from you."

He bent his eyes upon me gravely and nodded several times.

"Mr. Donovan," he began, "I repeat that I am not Henry Holbrook, and my daughter—is my daughter, and not your Miss Helen Holbrook. Moreover, if you will go to Tippecanoe or to Annandale and ask about me you will learn that I have long been a resident of this community, working at my trade, that of a canoe-maker. That shop down there by the creek and this house, I built myself."

"But the girl—"

"Was not Helen Holbrook, but my daughter, Rosalind Hartridge. She has been away at school, and came home only a week ago. You are clearly mistaken; and if you will call, as you undoubtedly will, on your Miss Holbrook at St. Agatha's in the morning, you will undoubtedly find your young lady there quite safely in charge of—what was the name, Miss Patricia Holbrook?—in whose behalf you take so praiseworthy an interest."

He was treating me quite as though I were a stupid school-boy, but I rallied sufficiently to demand:

"If you are so peaceable and only a boat-maker here, will you tell me why you have enemies who are so anxious to kill you? I imagine that murder isn't common on the quiet shores of this little creek, and that an

Italian sailor is not employed to kill men who have not a past of some sort behind them."

His brows knit and the jaw under his short beard tightened. Then he smiled and threw his pipe on the cabarette.

"I have only your word for it that there's an Italian in the wood-pile. I have friends among the country folk here and in the lake villages who can vouch for me. As I am not in the least interested in your affairs I shall not trouble you for your credentials; but as the hour is late and I hope I have satisfied you that we have no acquaintances in common, I will bid you good night. If you care for a boat to carry you home—"

"Thank you, no!" I jerked.

He bowed with slightly exaggerated courtesy, walked to the door and threw it open. He spoke of the beauty of the night as he walked by my side through the garden path to the outer gate. He asked where I had left my horse, wished me a pleasant ride home, and I was striding up the highway in no agreeable frame of mind before I quite realized that after narrowly escaping death on his house-boat at the hands of his enemies, Henry Holbrook had not only sent me away as ignorant as I had come, but had added considerably to my perplexities.

CHAPTER VI

A SUNDAY'S MIXED AFFAIRS

Of course, in company with the rest of my fellow-men, I had always tied the sheet in a sailing-boat; but in so little and crank a concern as a canoe, and with these charging squalls, I was not prepared to find myself follow the same principle; and it inspired me with some contemptuous views of our regard for life. It is certainly easier to smoke with the sheet fastened; but I had never before weighed a comfortable pipe of tobacco against an obvious risk, and gravely elected for the comfortable pipe.

—*R. L. S., An Inland Voyage.*

The faithful Ijima opened the door of Glenarm House, and after I had swallowed the supper he always had ready for me when I kept late hours, I established myself in comfort on the terrace and studied the affairs of the house of Holbrook until the robins rang up the dawn. On their hint I went to bed and slept until Ijima came in at ten o'clock with my coffee. An old hymn chimed by the chapel bells reminded me that it was Sunday. Services were held during the summer, so the house servants informed me, for the benefit of the cottagers at Port Annandale; and walking to our pier

I soon saw a flotilla of launches and canoes steering for St. Agatha's. I entered the school grounds by the Glenarm gate and watched several smart traps approach by the lake road, depositing other devout folk at the chapel.

The sight of bright parasols and modish gowns, the semi-urban Sunday that had fallen in this quiet corner of the world, as though out of the bright blue above, made all the more unreal my experiences of the night. And just then the door of the main hall of St. Agatha's opened, and forth came Miss Pat, Helen Holbrook and Sister Margaret and walked toward the chapel.

It was Helen who greeted me first.

"Aunt Pat can't withstand the temptations of a day like this. We're chagrined to think we never knew this part of the world before!"

"I'm sure there is no danger," said Miss Pat, smiling at her own timidity as she gave me her hand. I thought that she wished to speak to me alone, but Helen lingered at her side, and it was she who asked the question that was on her aunt's lips.

"We are undiscovered? You have heard nothing, Mr. Donovan?"

"Nothing, Miss Holbrook," I said; and I turned away from Miss Pat—whose eyes made lying difficult—to Helen, who met my gaze with charming candor.

And I took account of the girl anew as I walked between her and Miss Pat, through a trellised lane that alternated crimson ramblers and purple clematis, to the chapel, Sister Margaret's brown-robed figure preceding us. The open sky, the fresh airs of morning, the bird-song and the smell of verdurous earth in themselves gave Sabbath benediction. I challenged all my senses as I heard Helen's deep voice running on in light banter with her aunt. It was not possible that I had seen her through the dusk only the day before, traitorously meeting her father, the foe of this dear old lady who walked beside me. It was an impossible thing; the thought was unchivalrous and unworthy of any man calling himself gentleman. No one so wholly beautiful, no one with her voice, her steady tranquil eyes, could, I argued, do ill. And yet I had seen and heard her; I might have touched her as she crossed my path and ran down to the house-boat!

She wore to-day a white and green gown and trailed a green parasol in a white-gloved hand. Her small round hat with its sharply upturned brim imparted a new

frankness to her face. Several times she looked at me quickly—she was almost my own height—and there was no questioning the perfect honesty of her splendid eyes.

"We hoped you might drop in yesterday afternoon," she said, and my ears were at once alert.

"Yes," laughed Miss Pat, "we were—"

"We were playing chess, and almost came to blows!" said Helen. "We played from tea to dinner, and Sister Margaret really had to come and tear us away from our game."

I had now learned, as though by her own intention, that she had been at St. Agatha's, playing a harmless game with her aunt, at the very moment that I had seen her at the canoe-maker's. And even more conclusive was the fact that she had made this statement before her aunt, and that Miss Pat had acquiesced in it.

We had reached the church door, and I had really intended entering with them; but now I was in no frame of mind for church; I murmured an excuse about having letters to write.

"But this afternoon we shall go for a ride or a sail; which shall it be, Miss Holbrook?" I said, turning to Miss Pat in the church porch.

She exchanged glances with Helen before replying.

"As you please, Mr. Donovan. It might be that we should be safer on the water—"

I was relieved. On the lake there was much less chance of her being observed by Henry Holbrook than in the highways about Annandale. It was, to be sure, a question whether the man I had encountered at the canoe-maker's was really her brother; that question was still to be settled. The presence of Gillespie I had forgotten utterly; but he was, at any rate, the least important figure in the little drama unfolding before me.

"I shall come to your pier with the launch at five o'clock," I said, and with their thanks murmuring in my ears I turned away, went home and called for my horse.

I repeated my journey of the night before, making daylight acquaintance with the highway. I brought my horse to a walk as I neared the canoe-maker's cottage, and I read his sign and the lettering on his mail-box and satisfied myself that the name Hartridge was indisputably set forth on both. The cedar hedge and the pines before the house shut the cottage off from the curious completely; but I saw the flutter of white curtains in the open gable windows, and the red roof agleam in the bright sunlight. There was no one in sight; per-

haps the adventure and warning of the night had caused Holbrook to leave; but at any rate I was bent upon asking about him in Tippecanoe village.

This place, lying about two miles beyond the canoe-maker's, I found to be a sleepy hamlet of perhaps fifty cottages, a country store, a post-office, and a blacksmith shop. There was a water-trough in front of the store, and I dismounted to give my horse a drink while I went to the cottage behind the closed store to seek the shop-keeper.

I found him in a garden under an apple-tree reading a newspaper. He was an old fellow in spectacles, and, assuming that I was an idler from the summer colony, he greeted me courteously.

He confirmed my impression that the crops were all in first-rate condition, and that the day was fine. I questioned him as to the character of the winters in this region, spoke of the employments of the village folk, then mentioned the canoe-maker.

"Yes; he works the year round down there on the Tippecanoe. He sells his canoes all over the country—the Hartridge, that's his name. You must have seen his sign there by the cedar hedge. They say he gets big prices for his canoes."

"I suppose he's a native in these parts?" I ventured.

"No; but he's been here a good while. I guess nobody knows where he comes from—or cares. He works pretty hard, but I guess he likes it."

"He's an industrious man, is he?"

"Oh, he's a steady worker; but he's a queer kind, too. Now he never votes and he never goes to church; and for the sake of the argument, neither do I,"—and the old fellow winked prodigiously. "He's a mighty odd man; but I can't say that that's against him. But he's quiet and peaceable, and now his daughter—"

"Oh, he has a daughter?"

"Yes; and that's all he has, too; and they never have any visitors. The daughter just come home the other day, and we ain't hardly seen her yet. She's been away at school."

"I suppose Mr. Hartridge is absent sometimes; he doesn't live down there all the time, does he?"

"I can't say that I could prove it; sometimes I don't see him for a month or more; but his business is his own, stranger," he concluded pointedly.

"You think that if Mr. Hartridge had a visitor you'd know it?" I persisted, though the shopkeeper grew less amiable.

"Well, now I might; and again I mightn't. Mr. Hartridge is a queer man. I don't see him every day, and particularly in the winter I don't keep track of him."

With a little leading the storekeeper described Hartridge for me, and his description tallied exactly with the man who had caught me on the canoe-maker's premises the night before. And yet, when I had thanked the storekeeper and ridden on through the village, I was as much befuddled as ever. There was something decidedly incongruous in the idea that a man who was, by all superficial signs, at least, a gentleman, should be established in the business of making canoes by the side of a lonely creek in this odd corner of the world. From the storekeeper's account, Hartridge might be absent from his retreat for long periods; if he were Henry Holbrook and wished to annoy his sister, it was not so far from this lonely creek to the Connecticut town where Miss Pat lived. Again, as to the daughter, just home from school and not yet familiar to the eyes of the village, she might easily enough be an invention to hide the visits of Helen Holbrook. I found myself trying to account for the fact that, by some means short of the miraculous, Helen Holbrook had played chess with Miss Pat at St. Agatha's at the very hour I had seen her with

her father on the Tippecanoe. And then I was baffled again as I remembered that Paul Stoddard had sent the two women to St. Agatha's, and that their destination could not have been chosen by Helen Holbrook.

My thoughts wandered into many blind alleys as I rode on. I was thoroughly disgusted with myself at finding the loose ends of the Holbrooks' affairs multiplying so rapidly. The sun of noon shone hot overhead, and I turned my horse into a road that led homeward by the eastern shore of the lake. As I approached a little country church at the crown of a long hill I saw a crowd gathered in the highway and reined my horse to see what had happened. The congregation of farmers and their families had just been dismissed; and they were pressing about a young man who stood in the center of an excited throng. Drawing closer, I was amazed to find my friend Gillespie the center of attention.

"But, my dear sir," cried a tall, bearded man whom I took to be the minister of this wayside flock, "you must at least give us the privilege of thanking you! You can not know what this means to us, a gift so munificent—so far beyond our dreams."

Whereat Gillespie, looking bored, shook his head, and tried to force his way through the encircling rustics.

He was clad in a Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers of fantastic plaid, with a cap to match.

A young farmer, noting my curiosity and heavy with great news, whispered to me:

"That boy in short pants put a thousand-dollar bill in the collection basket. All in one bill! They thought it was a mistake, but he told our preacher it was a free gift."

Just then I heard the voice of my fool raised so that all might hear:

"Friends, on the dusty highway of life I can take none of the honor or credit you so kindly offer me. The money I have given you to-day I came by honestly. I stepped into your cool and restful house of worship this morning in search of bodily ease. The small voice of conscience stirred within me. I had not been inside a church for two years, and I was greatly shaken. But as I listened to your eloquent pastor I was aware that the green wall-paper interrupted my soul currents. That vegetable-green tint is notorious as a psychical interceptor. Spend the money as you like, gentlemen; but if I, a stranger, may suggest it, try some less violent color scheme in your mural decorations."

He seemed choking with emotion as with bowed head

he pushed his way through the circle and strode past me. The people stared after him, mystified and marveling. I heard an old man calling out:

"How wonderful are the ways of the Lord!"

I let Gillespie pass, and followed him slowly until a turn in the road hid us from the staring church folk. He turned and saw me.

"You have discovered me, Donovan. Be sure your sins will find you out! A simple people, singularly moved at the sight of a greenback. I have rarely caused so much excitement."

"I suppose you are trying to ease your conscience by giving away some of your button money."

"That is just it, Donovan. You have struck the brass tack on the head. But now that we have met again, albeit through no fault of my own, let me mention matters of real human interest."

"You might tell me what you're doing here first."

"Walking; there were no cabs, Donovan."

"You choose a queer hour of the day for your exercise."

"One might say the same for your ride. But let us be sensible. I dare say there's some common platform on which we both may stand."

"We'll assume it," I replied, dismounting by the roadside that I might talk more easily. Bandages were still visible at his wrists, and a strip of court-plaster across the knuckles of his right hand otherwise testified to the edges of the glass in St. Agatha's garden. He held up his hands ruefully.

"Those were nasty slashes; and I ripped them up badly in climbing out of your window. But I couldn't linger: I am not without my little occupations."

"You stand an excellent chance of being shot if you don't clear out of this. If there's any shame in you you will go without making further trouble."

"It has occurred to me," he began slowly, "that I know something that you ought to know. I saw Henry Holbrook yesterday."

"Where?" I demanded.

"On the lake. He's rented a sloop yacht called the *Stiletto*. I passed it yesterday on the Annandale steamer and I saw him quite distinctly."

"It's all your fault that he's here!" I blurted, thoroughly aroused. "If you had not followed those women they might have spent the remainder of their lives here and never have been molested. But he undoubtedly caught the trail from you."

Gillespie nodded gravely and frowned before he answered.

"I am sorry to spoil your theory, my dear Irish brother, but put this in your pipe: *Henry was here first!* He rented the sail-boat ten days ago—and I made my triumphal entry a week later. Explain that, if you please, Mr. Donovan."

I was immensely relieved by this disclosure, for it satisfied me that I had not been mistaken in the identity of the canoe-maker. I had, however, no intention of taking the button king into my confidence.

"Where is Holbrook staying?" I asked casually.

"I don't know—he keeps afloat. The *Stiletto* belongs to a Cincinnati man who isn't coming here this summer and Holbrook has got the use of the yacht. So much I learned from the boat storage man at Annandale; then I passed the *Stiletto* and saw Henry on board."

It was clear that I knew more than Gillespie, but he had supplied me with several interesting bits of information, and, what was more to the point, he had confirmed my belief that Henry Holbrook and the canoe-maker were the same person.

"You must see that I face a difficult situation here, without counting you. You don't strike me as a wholly

bad lot, Gillespie, and why won't you run along like a good boy and let me deal with Holbrook? Then when I have settled with him I'll see what can be done for you. Your position as an unwelcome suitor, engaged in annoying the lady you profess to love, and causing her great anxiety and distress, is unworthy of the really good fellow I believe you to be."

He was silent for a moment; then he spoke very soberly.

"I promise you, Donovan, that I will do nothing to encourage or help Holbrook. I know as well as you that he's a blackguard; but my own affairs I must manage in my own way."

"But as surely as you try to molest those women you will have to answer to me. I am not in the habit of beginning what I never finish, and I intend to keep those women out of your way as well as out of Holbrook's clutches, and if you get a cracked head in the business—well, the crack's in your own skull, Mr. Gillespie."

He shrugged his shoulders, threw up his head and turned away down the road.

There was something about the fellow that I liked. I even felt a certain pity for him as I passed him and rode on. He seemed simple and guileless, but with a

dogged manliness beneath his absurdities. He was undoubtedly deeply attached to Helen Holbrook and his pursuit of her partook of a knight-errantish quality that would have appealed to me in other circumstances; but he was the most negligible figure that had yet appeared in the Holbrook affair, and as I put my horse to the lope my thoughts reverted to Red Gate. That chess game and Helen's visit to her father were still to be explained; if I could cut those cards out of the pack I should be ready for something really difficult. I employed myself with such reflections as I completed my sweep round the lake, reaching Glenarm shortly after two o'clock.

I was hot and hungry, and grateful for the cool breath of the house as I entered the hall.

"Miss Holbrook is waiting in the library," Ijima announced; and in a moment I faced Miss Pat, who stood in one of the open French windows looking out upon the wood.

She appeared to be deeply absorbed and did not turn until I spoke.

"I have waited for some time; I have something of importance to tell you, Mr. Donovan," she began, seating herself.

"Yes, Miss Holbrook."

"You remember that this morning, on our way to the chapel, Helen spoke of our game of chess yesterday?"

"I remember perfectly," I replied; and my heart began to pound suddenly, for I knew what the next sentence would be.

"Helen was not at St. Agatha's at the time she indicated."

"Well, Miss Pat," I laughed, "Miss Holbrook doesn't have to account to me for her movements. It isn't important—"

"Why isn't it important?" demanded Miss Pat in a sharp tone that was new to me. She regarded me severely, and as I blinked under her scrutiny she smiled a little at my discomfiture.

"Why, Miss Holbrook, she is not accountable to me for her actions. If she fibbed about the chess it's a small matter."

"Perhaps it is; and possibly she is not accountable to me, either."

"We must not probe human motives too deeply, Miss Holbrook," I said evasively, wishing to allay her suspicions, if possible. "A young woman is entitled to her whims. But now that you have told me this, I sup-

pose I may as well know how she accounted to you for this trifling deception."

"Oh, she said she wished to explore the country for herself; she wished to satisfy herself of our safety; and she didn't want you to think she was running foolishly into danger. She chafes under restraint, and I fear does not wholly sympathize with my runaway tactics. She likes a contest! And sometimes Helen takes pleasure in —in—being perverse. She has an idea, Mr. Donovan, that you are a very severe person."

"I am honored that she should entertain any opinion of me whatever," I replied, laughing.

"And now," said Miss Pat, "I must go back. Helen went to her room to write some letters against a time when it may be possible to communicate with our friends, and I took the opportunity to call on you. It might be as well, Mr. Donovan, not to mention my visit."

I walked beside Miss Pat to the gate, where she dismissed me, remarking that she would be quite ready for a ride in the launch at five o'clock.

The morning had added a few new-colored threads to the tangled skein I was accumulating, but I felt that with the chess story explained I could safely eliminate

the supernatural; and I was relieved to find that no matter what other odd elements I had to reckon with, a girl who could be in two places at the same time was not among them.

Holbrook had not impressed me disagreeably; he had treated me rather decently, all things considered. The fact that he had enemies who were trying to kill him added zest to the whole adventure upon which my clerical friend Stoddard had launched me. The Italian sailor was a long way from tide-water, and who his employer was—the person who had hung aloof so conservatively during my scramble on the deck of the house-boat—remained to be seen. From every standpoint the Holbrook incident promised well, and I was glad to find that human beings were still capable of interesting me so much.

CHAPTER VII

A BROKEN OAR

We are in love's land to-day;
  Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
  Or sail or row?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May;
We are in love's hand to-day;
  Where shall we go?

—*Swinburne.*

The white clouds of the later afternoon cruised dreamily between green wood and blue sky. I brought the launch to St. Agatha's landing and embarked the two exiles without incident. We set forth in good spirits, Ijima at the engine and I at the wheel. The launch was comfortably large, and the bright cushions, with Miss Pat's white parasol and Helen's red one, marked us with the accent of Venice. I drove the boat toward the open to guard against unfortunate encounters, and the course once established I had little care but to give a wide berth to all the other craft afloat. Helen exclaimed re-

peatedly upon the beauty of the lake, which the west wind rippled into many variations of color. I was flattered by her friendliness; and yielded myself to the joy of the day, agreeably thrilled—I confess as much—by her dark loveliness as she turned from time to time to speak to me.

Snowy sails stood forth upon the water like listless clouds; paddles flashed as they rose dripping and caught the sun; and the lake's wooded margins gave green horizons, cool and soothing to the eye, on every hand. One of the lake steamers on its incessant journeys created a little sea for us, but without disturbing my passengers.

"Aunt Pat is a famous sailor!" observed Helen as the launch rocked. "The last time we crossed the captain had personally to take her below during a hurricane."

"Helen always likes to make a heroine of me," said Miss Pat with her adorable smile. "But I am not in the least afraid on the water. I think there must have been sailors among my ancestors."

She was as tranquil as the day. Her attitude toward her niece had not changed; and I pleased myself with the reflection that mere ancestry—the vigor and courage of indomitable old sea lords—did not sufficiently

account for her, but that she testified to an ampler background of race and was a fine flower that had been centuries in making.

We cruised the shore of Port Annandale at a discreet distance and then bore off again.

"Let us not go too near shore anywhere," said Helen; and Miss Pat murmured acquiescence.

"No; we don't care to meet people," she remarked, a trifle anxiously.

"I'm afraid I don't know any to introduce you to," I replied, and turned away into the broadest part of the lake. The launch was capable of a lively clip and the engine worked capitally. I had no fear of being caught, even if we should be pursued, and this, in the broad light of the peaceful Sabbath afternoon, seemed the remotest possibility.

It had been understood that we were to remain out until the sun dropped into the western wood, and I loitered on toward the upper lake where the shores were rougher.

"That's a real island over there—they call it Battle Orchard—you must have a glimpse of it."

"Oh, nothing is so delightful as an island!" exclaimed Helen; and she quoted William Sharp's lines:

"There is an Isle beyond our ken,
Haunted by Dreams of weary men.
Gray Hopes enshadow it with wings
Weary with burdens of old things:
There the insatiate water-springs
Rise with the tears of all who weep:
And deep within it,—deep, oh, deep!—
The furtive voice of Sorrow sings.
There evermore,
Till Time be o'er,
Sad, oh, so sad! the Dreams of men
Drift through the Isle beyond our ken."

Ijima had scanned the lake constantly since we started, as was his habit. Miss Pat turned to speak to Helen of the shore that now swept away from us in broader curves as we passed out of the connecting channel into the farther lake. Ijima remarked to me quietly, as though speaking of the engine:

"There's a man following in a rowboat."

And as I replied to some remark by Miss Pat, I saw, half a mile distant, its sails hanging idly, a sloop that answered Gillespie's description of the *Stiletto*. Its snowy canvas shone white against the green verdure of Battle Orchard.

"Shut off the power a moment. We will turn here, Ijima,"—and I called Miss Pat's attention to a hoary old sycamore on the western shore.

"Oh, I'm disappointed not to cruise nearer the island with the romantic name," cried Helen. "And there's a yacht over there, too!"

I already had the boat swung round, and in reversing the course I lost the *Stiletto,* which clung to the island shore; but I saw now quite plainly the rowboat Ijima had reported as following us. It hung off about a quarter of a mile and its single occupant had ceased rowing and shipped his oars as though waiting. He was between us and the strait that connected the upper and lower lakes. Though not alarmed I was irritated by my carelessness in venturing through the strait and anxious to return to the less wild part of the lake. I did not dare look over my shoulder, but kept talking to my passengers, while Ijima, with the rare intuition of his race, understood the situation and indicated by gestures the course.

"There's a boat sailing through the green, green wood," exclaimed Helen; and true enough, as we crept in close to the shore, we could still see, across a wooded point of the island, the sails of the *Stiletto,* as of a boat of dreams, drifting through the trees. And as I looked I saw something more. A tiny signal flag was run quickly to the topmast head, withdrawn once and flashed back;

and as I faced the bow again the boatman dropped his oars into the water.

"What a strange-looking man," remarked Miss Pat.

"He doesn't look like a native," I replied carelessly.

The launch swung slowly around, cutting a half-circle, of which the Italian's boat was the center. He dallied idly with his oars and seemed to pay no heed to us, though he glanced several times toward the yacht, which had now crept into full view, and under a freshening breeze was bearing southward.

"Full speed, Ijima."

The engine responded instantly, and we cut through the water smartly. There was a space of about twenty-five yards between the boatman and the nearer shore. I did not believe that he would do more than try to annoy us by forcing us on the swampy shore; for it was still broad daylight, and we were likely at any moment to meet other craft. I was confident that with any sort of luck I could slip past him and gain the strait, or dodge and run round him before he could change the course of his heavy skiff.

I kicked the end of an oar which the launch carried for emergencies and Ijima, on this hint, drew it toward him.

"You can see some of the roofs of Port Annandale across the neck here," I remarked, seeing that the women had begun to watch the approaching boat uneasily.

I kept up a rapid fire of talk, but listened only to the engine's regular beat. The launch was now close to the Italian's boat, and having nearly completed the semicircle I was obliged to turn a little to watch him. Suddenly he sat up straight and lay to with the oars, pulling hard toward a point we must pass in order to clear the strait and reach the upper lake again. The fellow's hostile intentions were clear to all of us now and we all silently awaited the outcome. His skiff rose high in air under the impulsion of his strong arms, and if he struck our lighter craft amidships, as seemed inevitable, he would undoubtedly swamp us.

Ijima half rose, glanced toward the yacht, which was heading for the strait, and then at me, but I shook my head.

"Mind the engine, Ijima," I said with as much coolness as I could muster.

The margin between us and the skiff rapidly diminished, and the Italian turned to take his bearings with every lift of his oars. He had thrown off his cap, and as he looked over his shoulder I saw his evil face sharply

outlined. I counted slowly to myself the number of strokes that would be necessary to bring him in collision if he persisted, charging against his progress our own swift, arrow-like flight over the water. The shore was close, and I had counted on a full depth of water, but Ijima now called out warningly in his shrill pipe and our bottom scraped as I veered off. This manœuver cost me the equivalent of ten of the Italian's deep strokes, and the shallow water added a new element of danger.

"Stand by with the oar, Ijima," I called in a low tone; and I saw in a flash Miss Pat's face, quite calm, but with her lips set tight.

Ten yards remained, I judged, between the skiff and the strait, and there was nothing for us now but to let speed and space work out their problem.

Ijima stood up and seized the oar. I threw the wheel hard aport in a last hope of dodging, and the launch listed badly as it swung round. Then the bow of the skiff rose high, and Helen shrank away with a little cry; there was a scratching and grinding for an instant, as Ijima, bending forward, dug the oar into the skiff's bow and checked it with the full weight of his body. As we fended off the oar snapped and splintered and he tumbled into the water with a great splash, while we swerved

and rocked for a moment and then sped on through the little strait.

Looking back, I saw Ijima swimming for the shore. He rose in the water and called "All right!" and I knew he would take excellent care of himself. The Italian had shipped his oars and lay where we had left him, and I heard him, above the beat of our engine, laugh derisively as we glided out of sight. The water rippled pleasantly beneath us; the swallows brushed the quiet blue with fleet wings, and in the west the sun was spreading a thousand glories upon the up-piling clouds. Out in the upper lake the wind freshened and we heard the low rumble of thunder.

"Miss Holbrook, will you please steer for me?"—and in effecting the necessary changes of position that I might get to the engine we were all able to regain our composure. I saw Miss Pat touch her forehead with her handkerchief; but she said nothing. Even after St. Agatha's pier hove in sight silence held us all. The wind, continuing to freshen, was whipping the lake with a sharp lash, and I made much of my trifling business with the engine, and of the necessity for occasional directions to the girl at the wheel.

My contrition at the danger to which I had stupidly

brought them was strong in me; but there were other things to think of. Miss Pat could not be deceived as to the animus of our encounter, for the Italian's conduct could hardly be accounted for on the score of stupidity; and the natural peace and quiet of this region only emphasized the gravity of her plight. My first thought was that I must at once arrange for her removal to some other place. With Henry Holbrook established within a few miles of St. Agatha's the school was certainly no longer a tenable harborage.

As I tended the engine I saw, even when I tried to avoid her, the figure of Helen Holbrook in the stern, quite intent upon steering and calling now and then to ask the course when in my preoccupation I forgot to give it. The storm was drawing a dark hood across the lake, and the thunder boomed more loudly. Storms in this neighborhood break quickly and I ran full speed for St. Agatha's to avoid the rain that already blurred the west.

We landed with some difficulty, owing to the roughened water and the hard drive of the wind; but in a few minutes we had reached St. Agatha's where Sister Margaret flung open the door just as the storm let go with a roar.

When we reached the sitting-room we talked with unmistakable restraint of the storm and of our race with it across the lake—while Sister Margaret stood by murmuring her interest and sympathy. She withdrew immediately and we three sat in silence, no one wishing to speak the first word. I saw with deep pity that Miss Pat's eyes were bright with tears, and my heart burned hot with self-accusation. Sister Margaret's quick step died away in the hall, and still we waited while the rain drove against the house in sheets and the branches of a tossing maple scratched spitefully on one of the panes.

"We have been found out; my brother is here," said Miss Pat.

"I am afraid that is true," I replied. "But you must not distress yourself. This is not Sicily, where murder is a polite diversion. The Italian wished merely to frighten us; it's a case of sheerest blackmail. I am ashamed to have given him the opportunity. It was my fault—my grievous fault; and I am heartily sorry for my stupidity."

"Do not accuse yourself! It was inevitable from the beginning that Henry should find us. But this place seemed remote enough. I had really begun to feel quite secure—but now!"

"But now!" repeated Helen with a little sigh.

I marveled at the girl's composure—at her quiet acceptance of the situation, when I knew well enough her shameful duplicity. Then by one of those intuitions of grace that were so charming in her she bent forward and took Miss Pat's hand. The emerald rings flashed on both as though in assertion of kinship.

"Dear Aunt Pat! You must not take that boat affair too seriously. It may not have been—father—who did that."

She faltered, dropping her voice as she mentioned her father. I was aware that Miss Pat put away her niece's hand with a sudden gesture—I did not know whether of impatience, or whether some new resolution had taken hold of her. She rose and moved nearer to me.

"What have you to propose, Mr. Donovan?" she asked, and something in her tone, in the light of her dear eyes, told me that she meant to fight, that she knew more than she wished to say, and that she relied on my support; and realizing this my heart went out to her anew. A maid brought in a lamp and within the arc of its soft light I saw Helen's lovely head as she rested her arms on the table watching us. If there was to be a contest of wits or of arms on this peaceful lake shore under

the high arches of summer, she and I were to be foes; and while we waited for the maid to withdraw I indulged in foolish speculations as to whether a man could love a girl and be her enemy at the same time.

"I think we ought to go away—at once," the girl broke out suddenly. "The place was ill-chosen; Father Stoddard should have known better than to send us here!"

"Father Stoddard did the best he could for us, Helen. It is unfair to blame him," said Miss Pat quietly. "And Mr. Donovan has been much more than kind in undertaking to care for us at all."

"I have blundered badly enough!" I confessed penitently.

"It might be better, Aunt Pat," began Helen slowly, "to yield. What can it matter! A quarrel over money—it is sordid—"

Miss Pat stood up abruptly and said quietly, without lifting her voice, and turning from one to the other of us:

"We have prided ourselves for a hundred years, we American Holbrooks, that we had good blood in us, and character and decency and morality; and now that the men of my house have thrown away their birthright,

and made our name a plaything, I am going to see whether the general decadence has struck me, too; and with my brother Arthur, a fugitive because of his crimes, and my brother Henry ready to murder me in his greed, it is time for me to test whatever blood is left in my own poor old body, and I am going to begin now! I will not run away another step; I am not going to be blackguarded and hounded about this free country or driven across the sea; and I will not give Henry Holbrook more money to use in disgracing our name. I have got to die—I have got to die before he gets it,"—and she smiled at me so bravely that something clutched my throat suddenly—"and I have every intention, Mr. Donovan, of living a very long time!"

Helen had risen, and she stood staring at her aunt in frank astonishment. Not often, probably never before in her life, had anger held sway in the soul of this woman; and there was something splendid in its manifestation. She had spoken in almost her usual tone, though with a passionate tremor toward the close; but her very restraint was in itself ominous.

"It shall be as you say, Miss Pat," I said, as soon as I had got my breath.

"Certainly, Aunt Pat," murmured Helen tamely.

"We can't be driven round the world. We may as well stay where we are."

The storm was abating and I threw open the windows to let in the air.

"If you haven't wholly lost faith in me, Miss Holbrook—"

"I have every faith in you, Mr. Donovan!" smiled Miss Pat.

"I shall hope to take better care of you in the future."

"I am not afraid. I think that if Henry finds out that he can not frighten me it will have a calming effect upon him."

"Yes; I suppose you are right, Aunt Pat," said Helen passively.

I went home feeling that my responsibilities had been greatly increased by Miss Pat's manifesto; on the whole I was relieved that she had not ordered a retreat, for it would have distressed me sorely to abandon the game at this juncture to seek a new hiding-place for my charges.

Long afterward Miss Pat's declaration of war rang in my ears. My heart leaps now as I remember it. And I should like to be a poet long enough to write A Ballade of All Old Ladies, or a lyric in their honor turned with the grace of Colonel Lovelace and blithe with the spirit

of Friar Herrick. I should like to inform it with their beautiful tender sympathy that is quick with tears but readier with strength to help and to save; and it should reflect, too, the noble patience, undismayed by time and distance, that makes a virtue of waiting—waiting in the long twilight with folded hands for the ships that never come! Men old and battle-scarred are celebrated in song and story; but who are they to be preferred over this serene sisterhood? Let the worn mothers of the world be throned by the fireside or placed at comfortable ease in the shadow of hollyhocks and old-fashioned roses in familiar gardens; it matters little, for they are supreme in any company. Whoever would be gracious must serve them; whoever would be wise must sit at their feet and take counsel. Nor believe too readily that the increasing tide of years has quenched the fire in their souls; rather, it burns on with the steady flame of sanctuary lights. Lucky were he who could imprison in song those qualities that crown a woman's years—voicing what is in the hearts of all of us as we watch those gracious angels going their quiet ways, tending their secret altars of memory with flowers and blessing them with tears.

CHAPTER VIII

A LADY OF SHADOWS AND STARLIGHT

Still do the stars impart their light
To those that travel in the night;
Still time runs on, nor doth the hand
Or shadow on the dial stand;
The streams still glide and constant are:
Only thy mind
Untrue I find
Which carelessly
Neglects to be
Like stream or shadow, hand or star.
—*William Cartwright.*

It was nine o'clock before Ijima came in, dripping from his tumble in the lake and his walk home through the rain. The Italian had made no effort to molest him, he reported; but he had watched the man row out to the *Stiletto* and climb aboard. Ijima has an unbroken record of never having asked me a question inspired by curiosity. He may inquire which shoes I want for a particular morning, but *why, where* and *when* are unknown in his vocabulary. He was, I knew, fairly entitled to an explanation of the incident of the after-

noon, though he would ask none, and when he had changed his clothes and reported to me in the library I told him in a word that there might be further trouble, and that I should expect him to stand night watch at St. Agatha's for a while, dividing a patrol of the grounds with the gardener. His "Yes, sir," was as calm as though I had told him to lay out my dress clothes, and I went with him to look up the gardener, that the division of patrol duty might be thoroughly understood.

I gave the Scotchman a revolver and Ijima bore under his arm a repeating rifle with which he and I had diverted ourselves at times in the pleasant practice of breaking glass balls. I assigned him the water-front and told the gardener to look out for intruders from the road. These precautions taken, I rang the bell at St. Agatha's and asked for the ladies, but was relieved to learn that they had retired, for the situation would not be helped by debate, and if they were to remain at St. Agatha's it was my affair to plan the necessary defensive strategy without troubling them. And I must admit here, that at all times, from the moment I first saw Helen Holbrook with her father at Red Gate, I had every intention of shielding her to the utmost. The thought of trapping her, of catching her, *flagrante de-*

Victo, was revolting; I had, perhaps, a notion that in some way I should be able to thwart her without showing my own hand; but this, as will appear, was not to be so easily accomplished.

I went home and read for an hour, then got into heavy shoes and set forth to reconnoiter. The chief avenue of danger lay, I imagined, across the lake, and I passed through St. Agatha's to see that my guards were about their business; then continued along a wooded bluff that rose to a considerable height above the lake. There was a winding path which the pilgrimages of school-girls in spring and autumn had worn hard, and I followed it to its crest, where there was a stone bench, established for the ease of those who wished to take their sunsets in comfort. The place commanded a fair view of the lake, and thence it was possible to see afar off any boat that approached St. Agatha's or Glenarm. The wooded bluff was cool and sweet from the rain, and a clear light was diffused by the moon as I lighted my pipe and looked out upon the lake for signs of the *Stiletto.*

The path that rose through the wood from St. Agatha's declined again from the seat, and came out somewhere below, where there was a spring sacred to the school-girls, and where, I dare say, they still indulge in

the incantations of their species. I amused myself picking out the pier lights as far as I had learned them, following one of the lake steamers on its zigzag course from Port Annandale to the village. Around me the great elms and maples still dripped. Eleven chimed from the chapel clock, the strokes stealing up to me dreamily. A moment later I heard a step in the path behind me, light, quick, and eager, and I bent down low on the bench, so that its back shielded me from view, and waited. I heard the sharp swish of bent twigs in the shrubbery as they snapped back into place in the narrow trail, and then the voice of some one humming softly. The steps drew closer to the bench, and some one passed behind me. I was quite sure that it was a woman —from the lightness of the step, the feminine quality in the voice that continued to hum a little song, and at the last moment the soft rustle of skirts. I rose and spoke her name before my eyes were sure of her.

"Miss Holbrook!" I exclaimed.

She did not cry out, though she stepped back quickly from the bench.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Donovan, is it?"

"It most certainly is!" I laughed. "We seem to have similar tastes, Miss Holbrook."

"An interest in geography, shall we call it?" she chaffed gaily.

"Or astronomy! We will assume that we are both looking for the Little Dipper."

"Good!" she returned on my own note. "Between the affairs of the Holbrooks and your evening Dipper hunt you are a busy man, Mr. Donovan."

"I am not half so busy as you are, Miss Holbrook! It must tax you severely to maintain both sides of the barricade at the same time," I ventured boldly.

"That does require some ingenuity," she replied musingly, "but I am a very flexible character."

"But what will bend will break—you may carry the game too far."

"Oh, are you tired of it already?"

"Not a bit of it; but I should like to make this stipulation with you: that as you and I seem to be pitted against each other in this little contest, we shall fight it all out behind Miss Pat's back. I prefer that she shouldn't know what a—" and I hesitated.

"Oh, give me a name, won't you?" she pleaded mockingly.

"What a beautiful deceiver you are!"

"Splendid! We will agree that I am a deceiver!"

"If it gives you pleasure! You are welcome to all the joy you can get out of it!"

"Please don't be bitter! Let us play fair, and not stoop to abuse."

"I should think you would feel contrite enough after that ugly business of this afternoon. You didn't appear to be even annoyed by that Italian's effort to smash the launch."

She was silent for an instant; I heard her breath come and go quickly; then she responded with what seemed a forced lightness:

"You really think that was inspired by—" she suddenly appeared at a loss.

"By Henry Holbrook, as you know well enough. And if Miss Pat should be murdered through his enmity, don't you see that your position in the matter would be difficult to explain? Murder, my dear young woman, is not looked upon complacently, even in this remote corner of the world!"

"You seem given to the use of strong language, Mr. Donovan. Let us drop the calling of names and consider just where you put me."

"I don't put you at all; you have taken your own stand. But I will say that I was surprised, not to say

pained, to find that you played the eavesdropper the very hour you came to Annandale."

A moment's silence; the water murmured in the reeds below; an owl hooted in the Glenarm wood; a restless bird chirped from its perch in a maple overhead.

"Oh, to be sure!" she said at last. "You thought I was listening while Aunt Pat unfolded the dark history of the Holbrooks."

"I knew it, though I tried to believe I was mistaken. But when I saw you there on Tippecanoe Creek, meeting your father at the canoe-maker's house, I was astounded; I did not know that depravity could go so far."

"My poor, unhappy, unfortunate father!" she said in a low voice; there was almost a moan in it.

"I suppose you defend your conduct on the ground of filial duty," I suggested, finding it difficult to be severe.

"Why shouldn't I? Who are you to judge our affairs? We are the unhappiest family that ever lived; but I should like you to know that it was not by my wish that you were brought into our councils. There is more in all this than appears!"

"There is nothing in it but Miss Pat—her security, her peace, her happiness. I am pledged to her, and the rest of you are nothing to me. But you may tell your

father that I have been in rows before and that I propose to stand by the guns."

"I shall deliver your message, Mr. Donovan; and I give you my father's thanks for it," she mocked.

"Your father calls you Rosalind—before strangers!" I remarked.

"Yes. It's a fancy of his," she murmured lingeringly. "Sometimes it's Viola, or Perdita, but, as I think of it, it's oftener Rosalind. I hope you don't object, Mr. Donovan?"

"No, I rather like it; it's in keeping with your variable character. You seem prone, like Rosalind, to woodland wandering. I dare say the other people of the cast will appear in due season. So far I have seen only the Fool."

"The Fool? Oh, yes; there *was* Touchstone, wasn't there?"

"I believe it is admitted that there was."

She laughed; I felt that we were bound to get on better, now that we understood each other.

"You are rather proud of your attainments, aren't you? I have really read the play, Mr. Donovan: I have even seen it acted."

"I did not mean to reflect on your intelligence, which

is acute enough; or on your attainments, which are sufficient; or on your experience of life, which is ample!"

"Well spoken! I really believe that I am liking you better all the time, Mr. Donovan."

"My heart is swollen with gratitude. You heard my talk with your father at his cottage last night. And then you flew back to Miss Pat and played the hypocrite with the artlessness of Rosalind—the real Rosalind."

"Did I? Then I'm as clever as I am wicked. You, no doubt, are as wise as you are good."

She folded her arms with a quick movement, the better, I thought, to express satisfaction with her own share of the talk; then her manner changed abruptly. She rested her hands on the back of the bench and bent toward me.

"My father dealt very generously with you. You were an intruder. He was well within his rights in capturing you. And, more than that, you drew to our place some enemies of your own who may yet do us grave injury."

"They were no enemies of mine! Didn't you hear me debating that matter with your father? They were his enemies and they pounced on me by mistake. It's not their fault that they didn't kill me!"

"That's a likely story. That little creek is the quietest place in the world."

"How do you know?" I demanded, bending closer toward her.

"Because my father tells me so! That was the reason he chose it."

"He wanted a place to hide when the cities became too hot for him. I advise you, Miss Holbrook, in view of all that has happened, and if you have any sense of decency left, to keep away from there."

"And I suggest to you, Mr. Donovan, that your devotion to my aunt does not require you to pursue my father. You do well to remember that a stranger thrusting himself into the affairs of a family he does not know puts himself in a very bad light."

"I am not asking your admiration, Miss Holbrook."

"You may save yourself the trouble!" she flashed; and then laughed out merrily. "Let us not be so absurd! We are quarreling like two school-children over an apple. It's really a pleasure to meet you in this unconventional fashion, but we must be amiable. Our affairs will not be settled by words—I am sure of that. I must beg of you, the next time you come forth at night, to wear your cloak and dagger. The stage-setting is

fair enough; and the players should dress their parts becomingly. I am already named Rosalind—at night; Aunt Pat we will call the Duchess in exile; and we were speaking a moment ago of the Fool. Well, yes; there was a Fool."

"I might take the part myself, if Gillespie were not already cast for it."

"Gillespie?" she said wonderingly; then added at once, as though memory had prompted her: "To be sure there is Gillespie."

"There is certainly Gillespie. Perhaps you would liefer call him Orlando?" I ventured.

"Let me see," she pondered, bending her head; then: "'O, that's a brave man! he writes brave verses, speaks brave words, swears brave oaths and breaks them bravely, quite traverse, athwart the heart of his lover; as a puisny tilter, that spurs his horse but on one side, breaks his staff like a noble goose; but all's brave that youth mounts and folly guides.'"

"That is Celia's speech, but well rendered. Let us consider that you are Rosalind, Celia, Viola and Ariel all in one. And I shall be those immortal villains of old tragedy—first, second and third murtherer; or, if it suit you better, let me be Iago for honesty; Othello

for great adventures; Hamlet for gloom; Shylock for relentlessness, and Romeo for love-sickness."

Again she bent her head; then drawing a little away and clasping her hands, she quoted: "'Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humour and like enough to consent. What would you say to me now, an I were your very, very Rosalind?'"

I stammered a moment, dimly recalling Orlando's reply in the play. I did not know whether she were daring me; and this was certainly not the girl's mood as we had met at St. Agatha's. My heart leaped and the blood tingled in my finger-tips as memory searched out the long-forgotten scene; and suddenly I threw at her the line:

"'How if the kiss be denied?'"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"The rehearsal has gone far enough. Let us come back to earth again."

But this, somehow, was not so easy.

Far across the lake a heavy train rumbled, and its engine blew a long blast for Annandale. I felt at that instant the unreality of the day's events, with their culmination in this strange interview on the height above the lake. Never, I thought, had man parleyed with woman

on so extraordinary a business. In the brief silence, while the whistle's echoes rang round the shore, I drew away from the bench that had stood like a barricade between us and walked toward her. I did not believe in her; she had flaunted her shameful trickery in my face; and yet I felt her spell upon me as through the dusk I realized anew her splendid height, the faint disclosure of her noble head and felt the glory of her dark eyes. Verily, a lady of shadows, moonlight and dreams, whom it befitted well to walk forth at night, bent upon plots and mischief, and compelling love in such foolish hearts as mine. She did not draw away, but stood quietly, with her head uplifted, a light scarf caught about her shoulders, and on her head a round sailor's cap, tipped away from her face.

"You must go back; I must see you safely to St. Agatha's," I said.

She turned, drawing the scarf close under her throat with a quick gesture, as though about to go. She laughed with more honest glee than I had known in her before, and I forgot her duplicity, forgot the bold game she was playing, and the consequences to which it must lead; my pulses bounded when a bit of her scarf touched my hand as she flung a loose end over her shoulder.

"My dear Mr. Donovan, you propose the impossible! We are foes, you must remember, and I can not accept your escort."

"But I have a guard about the house; you are likely to get into trouble if you try to pass through. I must ask you to remember our pledge, that you are not to vex Miss Pat unnecessarily in this affair. To rouse her in the night would only add to her alarm. She has had enough to worry her already. And I rather imagine," I added bitterly, "that you don't propose killing her with your own hands."

"No; do give me credit for that!" she mocked. "But I shall not disturb your guards, and I shall not distress Aunt Pat by making a row in the garden trying to run your pickets. I want you to stay here five minutes—count them honestly—until I have had time to get back in my own fashion. Is it a bargain?" She put out her hand as she turned away—her left hand. As my fingers closed upon it an instant the emerald ring touched my palm.

"I should think you would not wear that ring," I said, detaining her hand, "it is too like hers; it is as though you were plighted to her by it."

"Yes; it is like her own; she gave it—"

She choked and caught her breath sharply and her hand flew to her face.

"She gave it to my mother, long ago," she said, and ran away down the path toward the school. A bit of gravel loosened by her step slipped after her to a new resting-place; then silence and the night closed upon her.

I threw myself upon the bench and waited, marveling at her. If I had not touched her hand; if I had not heard her voice; if, more than all, I had not talked with her of her father, of Miss Pat, of intimate things which no one else could have known, I should not have believed that I had seen Helen Holbrook face to face.

CHAPTER IX

THE LIGHTS ON ST. AGATHA'S PIER

The night is still, the moon looks kind,
  The dew hangs jewels in the heath,
An ivy climbs across thy blind,
  And throws a light and misty wreath.

The dew hangs jewels in the heath,
  Buds bloom for which the bee has pined;
I haste along, I quicker breathe,
  The night is still, the moon looks kind.

Buds bloom for which the bee has pined,
  The primrose slips its jealous sheath,
As up the flower-watched path I wind
  And come thy window-ledge beneath.

The primrose slips its jealous sheath,—
  Then open wide that churlish blind,
And kiss me through the ivy wreath!
  The night is still, the moon looks kind.

—*Edith M. Thomas.*

On my way home through St. Agatha's I stopped to question the two guards. They had heard nothing, had seen nothing. How that girl had passed them I did not know. I scanned the main building, where she and Miss Pat had two rooms, with an intervening sitting-room,

but all was dark. Miss Helen Holbrook was undeniably a resourceful young woman of charm and wit, and I went on to Glenarm House with a new respect for her cleverness.

I was abroad early the next morning, retracing my steps through St. Agatha's to the stone bench on the bluff with a vague notion of confirming my memory of the night by actual contact with visible, tangible things. The lake twinkled in the sunlight, the sky overhead was a flawless sweep of blue, and the foliage shone from the deluge of the early night. But in the soft mold of the path the print of a woman's shoe was unmistakable. Now, in Ireland, when I was younger, I believed in fairies with all my heart, and to this day I gladly break a lance for them with scoffers. I know folk who have challenged them and been answered, and I have, with my own eyes, caught glimpses of their lights along Irish hillsides. Once, I verily believe, I was near to speech with them—it was in a highway by a starlit moor—but they laughed and ran away. The footprints in the school-path were, however, no elfin trifles. I bent down and examined them; I measured them—ungraciously, indefensibly, guiltily—with my hand, and rose convinced that the neat outlines spoke of a modish boot-

maker, and were not to be explained away as marking the lightly-limned step of a fairy or the gold-sandaled flight of Diana. Then I descended to St. Agatha's and found Miss Pat and Helen loitering tranquilly in the garden.

America holds no lovelier spot than the garden of St. Agatha's, with its soft slopes of lawn, its hedges of box, its columned roses, its interludes of such fragrant trifles as mignonette and sweet alyssum; its trellised clematis and honeysuckle and its cool background of vine-hung wall, where the eye that wearies of the riot of color may find rest.

They gave me good morning—Miss Pat calm and gracious, and Helen in the spirit of the morning itself, smiling, cool, and arguing for peace. Deception, as a social accomplishment, she had undoubtedly carried far; and I was hard put to hold up my end of the game. I have practised lying with past-masters in the art—the bazaar keepers of Cairo, horse dealers in Moscow and rug brokers in Teheran; but I dipped my colors to this amazing girl.

"I'm afraid that we are making ourselves a nuisance to you," said Miss Pat. "I heard the watchmen patrolling the walks last night."

"Yes; it was quite feudal!" Helen broke in. "I felt that we were back at least as far as the eleventh century. The splash of water—which you can hear when the lake is rough—must be quite like the lap of water in a moat. But I did not hear the clank of arms."

"No," I observed dryly. "Ijima wears blue serge and carries a gun that would shoot clear through a crusader. The gardener is a Scotchman, and his dialect would kill a horse."

Miss Pat paused behind us to deliberate upon a new species of hollyhock whose minarets rose level with her kind, gentle eyes. Something had been in my mind, and I took this opportunity to speak to Helen.

"Why don't you avert danger and avoid an ugly catastrophe by confessing to Miss Pat that your duty and sympathy lie with your father? It would save a lot of trouble in the end."

The flame leaped into Helen's face as she turned to me.

"I don't know what you mean! I have never been spoken to by any one so outrageously!" She glanced hurriedly over her shoulder. "My position is hard enough; it is difficult enough, without this. I thought you wished to help us."

I stared at her; she was drifting out of my reckoning, and leading me into uncharted seas.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have not talked with your father—that you have not seen him here?" I besought.

"Yes; I have seen him—once, and it was by accident. It was quite by accident."

"Yes; I know of that—"

"Then you have been spying upon me, Mr. Donovan!"

"Why did you tell me that outrageously foolish tale about your chess game, when I knew exactly where you were at the very hour you would have had me think you were dutifully engaged with your aunt? It seems to me, my dear Miss Holbrook, that that is not so easy of explanation, even to my poor wits."

"That was without purpose; really it was! I was restless and weary from so much confinement; you can't know how dreary these late years have been for us—for me—and I wished just once to be free. I went for a long walk into the country. And if you saw me, if you watched me—"

I gazed at her blankly. The thing could not have been better done on the stage; but Miss Pat was walking toward us, and I put an end to the talk.

"I came upon him by accident—I had no idea he was here," she persisted.

"You are not growing tired of us," began Miss Pat, with her brave, beautiful smile; "you are not anxious to be rid of us?"

"I certainly am not," I replied. "I can't tell you how glad I am that you have decided to remain here. I am quite sure that with a little patience we shall wear out the besiegers. Our position here has, you may say, the strength of its weaknesses. I think the policy of the enemy is to harass you by guerilla methods—to annoy you and frighten you into submission."

"Yes; I believe you are right," she said slowly. Helen had walked on, and I loitered beside Miss Pat.

"I hope you have had no misgivings, Miss Pat, since our talk yesterday."

"None whatever," she replied quickly. "I am quite persuaded in my own mind that I should have been better off if I had made a stand long ago. I don't believe cowardice ever pays, do you?"

She smiled up at me in her quick, bright way, and I was more than ever her slave.

"Miss Holbrook, you are the bravest woman in the world! I believe you are right. I think I should be

equal to ten thousand men with your spirit to put heart into me."

"Don't be foolish," she said, laughing. "But to show you that I am not really afraid, suppose you offer to take us for a drive this evening. I think it would be well for me to appear to-day, just to show the enemy that we are not driven to cover by our little adventure in the launch yesterday."

"Certainly! Shall we carry outriders and a rear guard?"

"Not a bit of it. I think we may be able to shame my brother out of his evil intentions by our defenselessness."

We waited for Helen to rejoin us, and the drive was planned for five. Promptly on the hour, after a day of activity on my part in cruising the lake, looking for signs of the enemy, we set forth in an open trap, and plunged into country roads that traversed territory new to all of us. I carried Ijima along, and when, after a few miles, Helen asked to take the reins, I changed seats with her, and gave myself up to talk with Miss Pat. The girl's mood was grave, and she wished to drive, I fancied, as an excuse for silence. The land rolled gradually away into the south and west, and we halted, in an hour or so, far from the lake, on a wooded eminence that

commanded a long sweep in every direction, and drew into the roadside. Ijima opened a gate that admitted us to a superb maple grove, and in a few minutes we were having tea from the hamper in the cheeriest mood in the world. The sun was contriving new marvels in the west, and the wood that dipped lakeward beneath us gave an illusion of thick tapestry to the eye.

"We could almost walk to the lake over the trees," said Miss Pat. "It's a charming picture."

Then, as we all turned to the lake, seeing it afar across the tree-tops through the fragrant twilight, I saw the *Stiletto* standing out boldly upon the waters of Annandale, with a languid impudence that I began to associate with its slim outlines and snowy canvas. Other craft were abroad, and Miss Pat, I judged, spoke only of the prettiness of the general landscape, and there was, to be sure, no reason why the sails of the *Stiletto* should have had any particular significance for her. Helen was still looking down upon the lake when Miss Pat suggested that we should go home; and even after her aunt called to her, the girl still stood, one hand resting upon the trunk of a great beech, her gaze bent wistfully, mournfully toward the lake. But on the homeward drive —she had asked for the reins again—her mood changed

abruptly, and she talked cheerily, often turning her head —a scarlet-banded sailor hat was, I thought, remarkably becoming—to chaff about her skill with the reins.

"I haven't a care or trouble in the world," declared Miss Pat when I left them at St. Agatha's. "I am sure that we have known the worst that can happen to us in Annandale. I refuse to be a bit frightened after that drive."

"It was charming," said Helen. "This is better than the English lake country, because it isn't so smoothed out."

"I will grant you all of that," I said. "I will go further and admit—what is much for me—that it is almost equal to Killarney."

There seemed to be sincerity in their good spirits, and I was myself refreshed and relieved as I drove into Glenarm; but I arranged for the same guard as on the night before. Helen Holbrook's double-dealing created a condition of affairs that demanded cautious handling, and I had no intention of being caught napping.

I am not, let me say, a person who boasts of his knowledge of human nature. Good luck has served to minimize my own lack of subtlety in dealing with my fellow-creatures; and I take no credit for such fortune

as I have enjoyed in contests of any sort with men or women. As for the latter, I admire, I reverence, I love them; but I can not engage to follow them when they leave the main road for short cuts and by-paths. The day had gone so well that I viewed the night with complacency. I read my foreign newspapers with a recurrence of the joy that the thought of remote places always kindles in me. An article in *The Times* on the unrest in Bulgaria—the same old article on the same old unrest—gave me the usual heartache: I have been waiting ten years for something to happen in that neighborhood—something really significant and offering a chance for fun, and it seems as far away as ever.

From the window of my room I saw the Japanese boy patrolling the walks of St. Agatha's, and the Holbrooks' affairs seemed paltry and tame in contrast with the real business of war. A buckboard of youngsters from Port Annandale passed in the road, leaving a trail of song behind them. Then the frog choruses from the little brook that lay hidden in the Glenarm wood sounded in my ears with maddening iteration, and I sought the open.

The previous night I had met Helen Holbrook by the stone seat on the ridge, and I can not deny that it was

with the hope of seeing her again that I set forth. That touch of her hand in the moonlight lingered with me: I thrilled with eagerness as I remembered how my pulses bounded when I found myself so close to her there in the fringe of wood. She was beautiful with a rare loveliness at all times, yet I found myself wondering whether, on the strange frontiers of love, it was her daring duplicity that appealed to me. I set myself stubbornly into a pillory reared of my own shame at the thought, and went out and climbed upon the Glenarm wall and stared at the dark bulk of St. Agatha's as I punished myself for having entertained any other thought of Helen Holbrook than of a weak, vain, ungrateful girl, capable of making sad mischief for her benefactor.

Ijima passed and repassed in the paved walk that curved among the school buildings; I heard his step, and marked his pauses as he met the gardener at the front door by an arrangement that I had suggested. As I considered the matter I concluded that Helen Holbrook could readily slip out at the back of the house, when the guards thus met, and that she had thus found egress on the night before.

At this moment the two guards met precisely at the front door, and to my surprise Sister Margaret, in the

brown garb of her Sisterhood, stepped out, nodded to the watchmen in the light of the overhanging lamp, and walked slowly round the buildings and toward the lake. The men promptly resumed their patrol. The Sister slipped away like a shadow through the garden; and I dropped down from the wall inside the school park and stole after her. The guards were guilty of no impropriety in passing her; there was, to be sure, no reason why Sister Margaret should not do precisely as she liked at St. Agatha's. However, my curiosity was piqued, and I crept quietly along through the young maples that fringed the wall. She followed a path that led down to the pier, and I hung back to watch, still believing that Sister Margaret had gone forth merely to enjoy the peace and beauty of the night. I paused in a little thicket, and heard her light step on the pier flooring; and I drew as near as I dared, in the shadow of the boat-house.

She stood beside the upright staff from which the pier lights swung—the white lantern between the two red ones—looking out across the lake. The lights outlined her tall figure distinctly. She peered about anxiously several times, and I heard the impatient tap of her foot on the planks. In the lake sounded the faint gurgle of water round a paddle, and in a moment a canoe glided

to the pier and a man stepped out. He bent down to seize the painter, and I half turned away, ashamed of the sheer curiosity that had drawn me after the Sister. Nuns who chafe at their prison-bars are not new, either to romance or history; and this surely was no affair of mine. Then the man stood up, and I saw that it was Gillespie. He was hatless, and his arms were bared. He began to speak, but she quieted him with a word; and as with a gesture she flung back her brown hood, I saw that it was Helen Holbrook.

"I had given you up," she said.

He took both her hands and held them, bending toward her eagerly. She seemed taller than he in the lantern light.

"I should have come across the world," he said.

"You must believe that I should not have asked this of you if I had not believed you could do it without injury to yourself—that it would impose no great burden on you, and that you would not think too ill of me—"

"I love you; I am here because I love you!" he said; and I thought better of him than I had. He was a fool, and weak; but he was, I believed, an honest fool, and my heart grew hot with jealous rage as I saw them there together.

"If there is more I can do!"

"No; and I should not ask you if there were. I have gone too far, as it is," she sighed.

"You must take no risks; you must take care that Miss Pat knows nothing."

"No; I must see father. He must go away. I believe he has lost his senses from brooding on his troubles."

"But how did he ever get here? There is something very strange about it."

"Oh, I knew he would follow us! But I did not tell him I was coming here—I hope you did not believe that of me. I did not tell him any more than I told you."

He laughed softly.

"You did not need to tell me; I could have found you anywhere in the world, Helen. That man Donovan is watching you like a hawk; but he's a pretty good fellow, with a Milesian joy in a row. He's going to protect Miss Pat and you if he dies at the business."

She shrugged her shoulders, and I saw her disdain of me in her face. A pretty conspiracy this was, and I seemed to be only the crumpled wrapping of a pack of cards, with no part in the game.

Gillespie drew an envelope from his pocket, held it to the white lantern for an instant, then gave it to her.

"I telegraphed to Chicago for a draft. He will have to leave here to get it—the bank at Annandale carries no such sum; and it will be a means of getting rid of him."

"Oh, I only hope he will leave—he must—he must!" she cried.

"You must go back," he said. "These matters will all come right in the end, Helen," he added kindly. "There is one thing I do not understand."

"Oh, there are many things I do not understand!"

"The thing that troubles me is that your father was here before you."

"No—that isn't possible; I can't believe it."

"He had engaged the *Stiletto* before you came to Annandale; and while I was tracing you across the country he was already here somewhere. He amuses himself with the yacht."

"Yes, I know; he is more of a menace that way—always in our sight—always where I must see him!"

Her face, clearly lighted by the lanterns, was touched with anxiety and sorrow, and I saw her, with that prettiest gesture of woman's thousand graces—the nimble touch that makes sure no errant bit of hair has gone wandering—lift her hand to her head for a moment.

The emerald ring flashed in the lantern light. I recall a thought that occurred to me there—that the widow's peak, so sharply marked in her forehead, was like the finger-print of some playful god. She turned to go, but he caught her hands.

"Helen!" he cried softly.

"No! Please don't!"

She threw the nun's hood over her head and walked rapidly up the pier and stole away through the garden toward St. Agatha's. Gillespie listened for her step to die away, then he sighed heavily and bent down to draw up his canoe. When I touched him on the shoulder he rose and lifted the paddle menacingly.

"Ah, so it's our young and gifted Irish friend!" he said, grinning. "No more sprinting stunts for me! I decline to run. The thought of asparagus and powdered glass saddens me. Look at these hands—these little hands still wrapped in mystical white rags. I have bled at every pore to give you entertainment, and now it's got to be twenty paces with bird-guns."

"What mischief are you in now?" I demanded angrily. "I thought I warned you, Gillespie; I thought I even appealed to your chivalry."

"My dear fellow, everything has changed. If a nun in

distress appeals to me for help, I am Johnny-on-the-spot for Mother Church."

"That was not the Sister, it was Miss Holbrook. I saw her distinctly; I heard—"

"By Jove, this is gallant of you, Donovan! You are a marvelous fellow!"

"I have a right to ask—I demand to know what it was you gave the girl."

"Matinée tickets—the American girl without matinée tickets is a lonely pleiad bumping through the void."

"You are a contemptible ass. Your conduct is scoundrelly. If you want to see Miss Holbrook, why don't you go to the house and call on her like a gentleman? And as for her—"

"Yes; and as for her—?"

He stepped close to me threateningly.

"And as for her—?" he repeated.

"As for her, she may go too far!"

"She is not answerable to you. She's the finest girl in the world, and if you intimate—"

"I intimate nothing. But what I saw and heard interested me a good deal, Gillespie."

"What you heard by stealth, creeping about here at night, prying into other people's affairs!"

"I have pledged myself to care for Miss Pat."

"It's noble of you, Donovan!" and he stepped away from me, grinning. "Miss Pat suggests nothing to me but 'button, button, who's got the button?' She's a bloomin' aristocrat, while I'm the wealth-cursed child of democracy."

"You're a charming specimen!" I growled.

It was plain that he saw nothing out of the way in thus conniving with Helen Holbrook against her aunt, and that he had not been struck by the enormity of the girl's conduct in taking money from him. He drew in his canoe as I debated with myself what to do with him.

"You've got to leave the lake," I said. "You've got to go."

"Then I'm going, thank you!"

He sprang into the canoe, driving it far out of my reach; his paddle splashed, and he was gone.

"Is that you, sir?" called Ijima behind me. "I thought I heard some one talking."

"It is nothing, Ijima."

CHAPTER X

THE FLUTTER OF A HANDKERCHIEF

As a bell in a chime
  Sets its twin-note a-ringing,
As one poet's rhyme
  Wakes another to singing,
So once she has smiled
All your thoughts are beguiled,
And flowers and song from your childhood are bringing.

* * * * * * *

Each grace is a jewel
  Would ransom the town;
Her speech has no cruel,
  Her praise is renown;
'Tis in her as though Beauty,
Resigning to Duty
The scepter, had still kept the purple and crown.

—*Robert Underwood Johnson.*

The next morning at eight o'clock I sent a note to Miss Pat, asking if she and the other ladies of her house would not take breakfast with me at nine; and she replied, on her quaint visiting-card, in an old-fashioned hand, that she and Helen would be glad to come, but that Sister Margaret begged to be excused. It had been

in my mind from the first to ask them to dine at Glenarm, and now I wished to see this girl, to test, weigh, study her, as soon as possible after her meeting with Gillespie. I wished to see how she would bear herself before her aunt and me with that dark transaction on her conscience. The idea pleased me, and when I saw the two women coming through the school garden I met them at the gate.

Breakfast seems to be, in common experience, the most difficult meal of the day, and yet that hour hangs in memory still as one of the brightest I ever spent. The table was set on the terrace, and its white napery, the best Glenarm silver and crystal, and a bowl of red roses still dewy from the night, all blended coolly with the morning. As the strawberries were passed I felt that the little table had brought us together in a new intimacy. It was delightful to sit face to face with Miss Pat, and not less agreeable to have at my right hand this bewildering girl, whose eyes laughed at me when I sought shame in their depths. Miss Pat poured the coffee, and when I took my cup I felt that it carried benediction with it. I was glad to see her so at peace with the world, and her heart was not older, I could have sworn, than the roses before her.

"I shall refuse to leave when my time is up!" she declared. "Do you think you could spend a winter here, Helen?"

"I should love it!" the girl replied. "It would be perfectly splendid to watch the seasons march across the lake. We can both enroll ourselves at St. Agatha's as post-graduate students, and take a special course in weather here."

"If I didn't sometimes hear trains passing Annandale in the night, I should forget that there's a great busy world off there somewhere," said Miss Pat. "I am ashamed of myself for having been so long discovering this spot. Except one journey to California, I was never west of Philadelphia until I came here."

The world was satisfactory as it stood; and I was aware of no reason why it should move on. The chime of the chapel tower drifted to us drowsily, as though anxious to accommodate itself to the mood of a day that began business by shattering the hour-glass. The mist that hung over the water rose lazily, and disclosed the lake agleam in the full sunlight. Though Miss Pat was content to linger, Helen, I thought, appeared restless; she rose and walked to the edge of the terrace, the better to scan the lake, while Miss Pat and I talked on. Miss

Pat's gift of detachment was remarkable; if we had been looking down from a balcony upon the Grand Canal, or breakfasting in an Italian garden, she could not have been more at ease; nor did she refer even remotely to the odd business that had brought her to the lake. She was, to be explicit, describing in her delightful low voice, and in sentences vivid with spirit and color, a visit she had once paid to a noble Italian family at their country seat. As Helen wandered out of hearing I thought Miss Pat would surely seize the opportunity to speak of the girl's father, at least to ask whether I had heard of him further; but she avoided all mention of her troubles.

Helen stood by the line of scarlet geraniums that marked the balustrade, at a point whence the best view of the lake was obtainable—her hands clasped behind her, her head turned slightly.

"There is no one quite like her!" exclaimed Miss Pat.

"She is beautiful!" I acquiesced.

Miss Pat talked on quickly, as though our silence might cause Helen to turn and thus deprive us of the picture.

"Should you like to look over the house?" I asked a little later, when Helen had come back to the table. "It

is said to be one of the finest houses in interior America, and there are some good pictures."

"We should be very glad," said Miss Pat; and Helen murmured assent.

"But we must not stay too long, Aunt Pat. Mr. Donovan has his own affairs. We must not tax his generosity too far."

"And we are going to send some letters off to-day. If it isn't asking too much, I should like to drive to the village later," said Miss Pat.

"Yes; and I should like a paper of pins and a new magazine," said Helen, a little, a very little eagerness in her tone.

"Certainly. The stable is at your disposal, and our entire marine."

"But we must see the Glenarm pictures first," said Miss Pat, and we went at once into the great cool house, coming at last to the gallery on the third floor.

"Whistler!" Miss Pat exclaimed in delight before the famous *Lady in the Gray Cloak*. "I thought that picture was owned in England."

"It was; but old Mr. Glenarm had to have it. That Meissonier is supposed to be in Paris, but you see it's here."

"It's wonderful!" said Miss Pat. She returned to the Whistler and studied it with rapt attention, and I stood by, enjoying her pleasure. One of the housemaids had followed us to the gallery and opened the French windows giving upon a balcony, from which the lake lay like a fold of blue silk beyond the wood. Helen had passed on while Miss Pat hung upon the Whistler.

"How beautifully those draperies are suggested, Helen. That is one of the best of all his things."

But Helen was not beside her, as she had thought. There were several recesses in the room, and I thought the girl had stepped into one of these, but just then I saw her shadow outside.

"Miss Holbrook is on the balcony," I said.

"Oh, very well. We must go," she replied quietly, but lingered before the picture.

I left Miss Pat and crossed the room to the balcony. As I approached one of the doors I saw Helen, standing tiptoe for greater height, slowly raise and lower her handkerchief thrice, as though signaling to some one on the water.

I laughed outright as I stepped beside her.

"It's better to be a picture than to look at one, Miss Holbrook! Allow me!"

In her confusion she had dropped her handkerchief, and when I returned it she slipped it into her cuff with a murmur of thanks. A flash of anger lighted her eyes and she colored slightly; but she was composed in an instant. And, looking off beyond the water-tower, I was not surprised to see the *Stiletto* quite near our shore, her white sails filling lazily in the scant wind. A tiny flag flashed recognition and answer of the girl's signal, and was hauled down at once.

We were both silent as we watched it; then I turned to the girl, who bent her head a moment, tucking the handkerchief a trifle more securely into her sleeve. She smiled quizzically, with a compression of the lips.

"The view here is fine, isn't it?"

We regarded each other with entire good humor. I heard Miss Pat within, slowly crossing the bare floor of the gallery.

"You are incomparable!" I exclaimed. "Verily, a daughter of Janus has come among us!"

"The best pictures are outdoors, after all," commented Miss Pat; and after a further ramble about the house they returned to St. Agatha's, whence we were to drive together to Annandale in half an hour.

I went to the stone water-tower and scanned the

movements of the *Stiletto* with a glass while I waited. The sloop was tacking slowly away toward Annandale, her skipper managing his sheet with an expert hand. It may have been the ugly business in which the pretty toy was engaged, or it may have been the lazy deliberation of her oblique progress over the water, but I felt then and afterward that there was something sinister in every line of the *Stiletto*. The more I deliberated the less certain I became of anything that pertained to the Holbrooks; and I tested my memory by repeating the alphabet and counting ten, to make sure that my wits were still equal to such exercises.

We drove into Annandale without incident and with no apparent timidity on Miss Pat's part. Helen was all amiability and cheer. I turned perforce to address her now and then, and was ashamed to find that the lurking smile about her lips, and a challenging light in her eyes, woke no resentment in me. The directness of her gaze was in itself disconcerting; there was no heavy-lidded insolence about her: her manner suggested a mischievous child who hides your stick and with feigned interest aids your search for it in impossible places.

I left Miss Pat and Helen at the general store while I sought the hardware merchant with a list of trifles

required for Glenarm. I was detained some time longer than I had expected, and in leaving I stood for a moment on the platform before the shop, gossiping with the merchant of village affairs. I glanced down the street to see if the ladies had appeared, and observed at the same time my team and wagon standing at the curb in charge of the driver, just as I had left them.

While I still talked to the merchant, Helen came out of the general store, glanced hurriedly up and down the street, and crossed quickly to the post-office, which lay opposite. I watched her as I made my adieux to the shopkeeper, and just then I witnessed something that interested me at once. Within the open door of the post-office the Italian sailor lounged idly. Helen carried a number of letters in her hand, and as she entered the post-office—I was sure my eyes played me no trick—deftly, almost imperceptibly, an envelope passed from her hand to the Italian's. He stood immovable, as he had been, while the girl passed on into the office. She reappeared at once, recrossed the street and met her aunt at the door of the general store. I rejoined them, and as we all met by the waiting trap the Italian left the post-office and strolled slowly away toward the lake.

I was not sure whether Miss Pat saw him. If she did

she made no sign, but began describing with much amusement an odd countryman she had seen in the shop.

"You mailed our letters, did you, Helen? Then I believe we have quite finished, Mr. Donovan. I like your little village; I'm disposed to love everything about this beautiful lake."

"Yes; even the town hall, where the Old Georgia Minstrels seem to have appeared for one night only, some time last December, is a shrine worthy of pilgrimages," remarked Helen. "And postage stamps cost no more here than in Stamford. I had really expected that they would be a trifle dearer."

I laughed rather more than was required, for those wonderful eyes of hers were filled with something akin to honest fun. She was proud of herself, and was even flushed the least bit with her success.

As we passed the village pier I saw the *Stiletto* lying at the edge of the inlet that made a miniature harbor for the village, and, rowing swiftly toward it, his oars flashing brightly, was the Italian, still plainly in sight. Whether Miss Pat saw the boat and ignored it, or failed to see, I did not know, for when I turned she was studying the cover of a magazine that lay in her lap. Helen fell to talking vivaciously of the contrasts between

American and English landscape; and so we drove back to St. Agatha's.

Thereafter, for the matter of ten days, nothing happened. I brought the ladies of St. Agatha's often to Glenarm, and we went forth together constantly by land and water without interruption. They received and despatched letters, and nothing marred the quiet order of their lives. The *Stiletto* vanished from my horizon, and lay, so Ijima learned for me, within the farther lake. Henry Holbrook had, I made no doubt, gone away with the draft Helen had secured from Gillespie, and of Gillespie himself I heard nothing.

As for Helen, I found it easy to forgive, and I grew eloquently defensive whenever my heart accused her. Her moods were as changing as those of the lake, and, like it, knew swift-gathering, passionate storms. Helen of the stars was not Helen of the vivid sunlight. The mystery of night vanished in her zest for the day, and I felt that her spirit strove against mine in all our contests with paddle and racquet, or in our long gallops into the heart of the sunset. She had fashioned for the night a dream-world in which she moved like a whimsical shadow, but by day the fire of the sun flashed in her blood.

We established between ourselves a comradeship that was for me delightfully perilous, but which—so she intimated one day, as though in warning—was only an armed neutrality. We were playing tennis in the Glenarm court at the time, and she smashed the ball back to me viciously.

"Your serve," she said.

And thus, with the joy of June filling the world, the enchanted days sped by.

CHAPTER XI

THE CARNIVAL OF CANOES

Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.

—Emerson.

I had dined alone and was lounging about the grounds when I heard voices near the Glenarm wall. There was no formal walk there, and my steps were silenced by the turf. The heavy scent of flowers from within gave me a hint of my whereabouts; there was, I remembered, at this point on the school lawn a rustic bench embowered in honeysuckle, and Miss Pat and Helen were, I surmised, taking their coffee there. I started away, thinking to enter by the gate and join them, when Helen's voice rose angrily—there was no mistaking it, and she said in a tone that rang oddly on my ears:

"But you are unkind to him! You are unjust! It is not fair to blame father for his ill-fortune."

"That is true, Helen; but it is not your father's ill-

fortune that I hold against him. All I ask of him is to be sane, reasonable, to change his manner of life, and to come to me in a spirit of fairness."

"But he is proud, just as you are; and Uncle Arthur ruined him! It was not father, but Uncle Arthur, who brought all these hideous things upon us."

I passed rapidly on, and resumed my walk elsewhere. It was a sad business, the shadowy father; the criminal uncle, who had, as Helen said, brought ruin upon them all; the sweet, motherly, older sister, driven in desperation to hide; and, not less melancholy, this beautiful girl, the pathos of whose position had struck me increasingly. Perhaps Miss Pat was too severe, and I half accused her of I know not what crimes of rapacity and greed for withholding her brother's money; then I set my teeth hard into my pipe as my slumbering loyalty to Miss Pat warmed in my heart again.

"It's the night of the carnival, sir," Ijima reminded me, seeking me at the water-tower.

"Very good, Ijima. You needn't lock the boat-house. I may go out later."

The cottagers at Port Annandale hold once every summer a canoe fête, and this was the appointed night. I was in no mood for gaiety of any sort, but it occurred

to me that I might relieve the strained relations between Helen and her aunt by taking them out to watch the procession of boats. I passed through the gate and took a turn or two, not to appear to know of the whereabouts of the women, and to my surprise met Miss Pat walking alone.

She greeted me with her usual kindness, but I knew that I had broken upon sad reflections. Her handkerchief vanished into the silk bag she wore at her wrist. Helen was not in sight, but I strolled back and forth with Miss Pat, thinking the girl might appear.

"I had a note from Father Stoddard to-day," said Miss Pat.

"I congratulate you," I laughed. "He doesn't honor me."

"He's much occupied," she remarked defensively; "and I suppose he doesn't indulge in many letters. Mine was only ten lines long, not more!"

"Father Stoddard feels that he has a mission in the world, and he has little time for people like us, who have food, clothes and drink in plenty. He gives his life to the hungry, unclothed and thirsty."

And now, quite abruptly, Miss Pat spoke of her brother.

"Has Henry gone?"

"Yes; he left ten days ago."

She nodded several times, then looked at me and smiled.

"You have frightened him off! I am grateful to you!"—and I was glad in my heart that she did not know that Gillespie's money had sent him away.

Helen had not appeared, and I now made bold to ask for her.

"Let me send the maid to tell her you are here," said Miss Pat, and we walked to the door and rang.

The maid quickly reported that Miss Holbrook begged to be excused.

"She is a little afraid of the damp night air of the garden," said Miss Pat, with so kind an intention that I smiled to myself. It was at the point of my tongue to remark, in my disappointment at not seeing her, that she must have taken sudden alarm at the lake atmosphere; but Miss Pat talked on unconcernedly. I felt from her manner that she wished to detain me. No one might know how her heart ached, but it was less the appeal of her gentleness that won me now, I think, than the remembrance that flashed upon me of her passionate outburst after our meeting with the Italian; and that

seemed very long ago. She had been magnificent that day, like a queen driven to desperation, and throwing down the gauntlet as though she had countless battalions at her back. Indecision took flight before shame; it was a privilege to know and to serve her!

"Miss Holbrook, won't you come out to see the water fête? We can look upon it in security and comfort from the launch. The line of march is from Port Annandale past here and toward the village, then back again. You can come home whenever you like. I had hoped Miss Helen might come, too, but I beg that you will take compassion upon my loneliness."

I had flung off my cap with the exaggerated manner I sometimes used with her; and she dropped me a courtesy with the prettiest grace in the world.

"I shall be with you in a moment, my lord!"

She reappeared quickly and remarked, as I took her wraps, that Helen was very sorry not to come.

The gardener was on duty, and I called Ijima to help with the launch. Brightly decorated boats were already visible in the direction of Port Annandale; even the tireless lake "tramps" whistled with a special flourish and were radiant in vari-colored lanterns.

"This is an ampler Venice, but there should be music

to make it complete," observed Miss Pat, as we stole in and out among the gathering fleet. And then, as though in answer, a launch passed near, leaving a trail of murmurous chords behind—the mournful throb of the guitar, the resonant beat of banjo strings. Nothing can be so soothing to the troubled spirit as music over water, and I watched with delight Miss Pat's deep absorption in all the sights and sounds of the lake. We drifted past a sail-boat idling with windless sails, its mast trimmed with lanterns, and every light multiplying itself in the quiet water. Many and strange craft appeared—farm folk and fishermen in clumsy rowboats and summer colonists in launches, skiffs and canoes, appeared from all directions to watch the parade.

The assembling canoes flashed out of the dark like fireflies. Not even the spirits that tread the air come and go more magically than the canoe that is wielded by a trained hand. The touch of the skilled paddler becomes but a caress of the water. To have stolen across Saranac by moonlight; to have paddled the devious course of the York or Kennebunk when the sea steals inland for rest, or to dip up stars in lovely Annandale—of such experiences is knowledge born!

I took care that we kept well to ourselves, for Miss

Pat turned nervously whenever a boat crept too near. Ijima, understanding without being told, held the power well in hand. I had scanned the lake at sundown for signs of the *Stiletto,* but it had not ventured from the lower lake all day, and there was scarce enough air stirring to ruffle the water.

"We can award the prize for ourselves here at the turn of the loop," I remarked, as we swung into place and paused at a point about a mile off Glenarm. "Here comes the flotilla!"

"The music is almost an impertinence, lovely as it is. The real song of the canoe is 'dip and glide, dip and glide,'" said Miss Pat.

The loop once made, we now looked upon a double line whose bright confusion added to the picture. The canoe offers, when you think of it, little chance for the decorator, its lines are so trim and so founded upon rigid simplicity; but many zealous hands had labored for the magic of this hour. Slim masts supported lanterns in many and charming combinations, and suddenly, as though the toy lamps had taken wing, rockets flung up their stars and roman candles their golden showers at a dozen points of the line and broadened the scope of the picture. A scow placed midway of the loop now lighted

the lake with red and green fire. The bright, graceful argosies slipped by, like beads upon a rosary. When the last canoe had passed, Miss Pat turned to me, sighing softly:

"It was too pretty to last; it was a page out of the book of lost youth."

I laughed back at her and signaled Ijima to go ahead and then, as the water churned and foamed and I took the wheel, we were startled by an exclamation from some one in a rowboat near at hand. The last of the peaceful armada had passed, but now from the center of the lake, unobserved and unheralded, stole a canoe fitted with slim masts carried high from bow to stern with delightful daring. The lights were set in globes of green and gold, and high over all, its support quite invisible, shone a golden star that seemed to hover and follow the shadowy canoe.

We all watched the canoe intently; and my eyes now fell upon the figure of the skipper of this fairy craft, who was set forth in clear relief against the red fire beyond. The sole occupant of the canoe was a girl—there was no debating it; she flashed by within a paddle's length of us, and I heard the low bubble of water under her blade. She paddled kneeling, Indian fashion, and

was lessening the breach between herself and the last canoe of the orderly line, which now swept on toward the casino.

"That's the prettiest one of all—" began Miss Pat, then ceased abruptly. She bent forward, half rising and gazing intently at the canoe. What she saw and what I saw was Helen Holbrook plying the paddle with practised stroke; and as she passed she glanced aloft to make sure that her slender mast of lights was unshaken; and then she was gone, her star twinkling upon us bewilderingly. I waited for Miss Pat to speak, but she did not turn her head until the canoe itself had vanished and only its gliding star marked it from the starry sisterhood above.

An exclamation faltered on my lips.

"It was—it was like—it *was*—"

"I believe we had better go now," said Miss Pat softly, and, I thought, a little brokenly.

But we still followed the star with our eyes, and we saw it gain the end of the procession, sweep on at its own pace, past the casino, and then turn abruptly and drive straight for Glenarm pier. It was now between us and our own shore. It shone a moment against our pier lights; then the star and the fairy lanterns beneath it

vanished one after another and the canoe disappeared as utterly as though it had never been.

I purposely steered a zigzag course back to St. Agatha's. Since Helen had seen fit to play this trick upon her aunt I wished to give her ample time to dispose of her canoe and return to the school. If we had been struck by a mere resemblance, why did the canoeist not go on to the casino and enjoy the fruits of her victory? I tried to imagine Gillespie a party to the escapade, but I could not fit him into it. Meanwhile I babbled on with Miss Pat. An occasional rocket still broke with a golden shower over the lake, and she now discussed the carnival and declared the gondola inferior for grace to the American canoe. Her phrases were, however, a trifle stiff and not in her usual light manner.

I walked with her from the pier to St. Agatha's.

Sister Margaret, who had observed the procession from an upper window, threw open the door for us.

"How is Helen?" asked Miss Pat at once.

"She is very comfortable," replied the Sister. "I went up only a moment ago to see if she wanted anything."

Miss Pat turned and gave me her hand in her pretty fashion.

"You see, it could not have been—it was not—Helen;

our eyes deceived us! Thank you very much, Mr. Donovan!"

There was no mistaking her relief; she smiled upon me beamingly as I stood before her at the door.

"Of course! On a fête night one can never trust one's eyes!"

"But it was all bewilderingly beautiful. You are most compassionate toward a poor old woman in exile, Mr. Donovan. I must go up to Helen and make her sorry for all she has missed."

I went back to the launch and sought far and near upon the lake for the canoe with the single star. I wanted to see again the face that was uplifted in the flood of colored light—the head, the erect shoulders, the arms that drove the blade so easily and certainly; for if it was not Helen Holbrook it was her shadow that the gods had sent to mock me upon the face of the waters.

CHAPTER XII

THE MELANCHOLY OF MR. GILLESPIE

I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's, which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is all these: but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects; and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.

—*As You Like It.*

I laughed a moment ago when, in looking over my notes of these affairs, I marked the swift transition from those peaceful days to others of renewed suspicions and strange events. I had begun to yield myself to blandishments and to feel that there could be no further interruption of the idyllic hours I was spending in Helen Holbrook's company. I still maintained, to be sure, the guard as it had been established; and many pipes I smoked on St. Agatha's pier, in the fond belief that I was merely fulfilling my office as protector of Miss Pat, whereas I had reached a point where the very walls that

held Helen Holbrook were of such stuff as dreams are made of. My days were keyed to a mood that was impatient of questions and intolerant of doubts. I was glad to take the hours as they came, so long as they brought her. I did not refer to her appearance in the parade of canoes, nor did Miss Pat mention it to me again. It was a part of the summer's enchantment, and it was not for me to knock at doors to which Helen Holbrook held the golden keys.

The only lingering blot in the bright calendar of those days was her meeting with Gillespie on the pier, and the fact that she had accepted money from him for her rascally father. But even this I excused. It was no easy thing for a girl of her high spirits to be placed in a position of antagonism to her own father; and as for Gillespie, he was at least a friend, abundantly able to help her in her difficult position; and if, through his aid, she had been able to get rid of her father, the end had certainly justified the means. I reasoned that an educated man of good antecedents who was desperate enough to attempt murder for profit in this enlightened twentieth century was cheaply got rid of at any price, and it was extremely decent of Gillespie—so I argued—to have taken himself away after providing the means of the

girl's release. I persuaded myself eloquently on these lines while I exhausted the resources of Glenarm in providing entertainment for both ladies. There had been other breakfasts on the terrace at Glenarm, and tea almost every day in the shadow of St. Agatha's, and one dinner of state in the great Glenarm dining-room; but more blessed were those hours in which we rode, Helen and I, through the sunset into dusk, or drove a canoe over the quiet lake by night. Miss Pat, I felt sure, in so often leaving me alone with Helen, was favoring my attentions; and thus the days passed, like bubbles on flowing water.

She was in my thoughts as I rode into Annandale to post some letters, and I was about to remount at the post-office door when I saw a crowd gathered in front of the village inn and walked along the street to learn the cause of it. And there, calmly seated on a soap-box, was Gillespie, clad in amazing checks, engaged in the delectable occupation of teaching a stray village mongrel to jump a stick. The loungers seemed highly entertained, and testified their appreciation in loud guffaws. I watched the performance for several minutes, Gillespie meanwhile laboring patiently with the dull dog, until finally it leaped the stick amid the applause of the

crowd. Gillespie patted the dog and rose, bowing with exaggerated gravity.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I thank you for your kind attention. Let my slight success with that poor cur teach you the lesson that we may turn the idlest moment to some noble use. The education of the lower animals is something to which too little attention is paid by those who, through the processes of evolution, have risen to a higher species. I am grateful, gentlemen, for your forbearance, and trust we may meet again under circumstances more creditable to us all—including the dog."

The crowd turned away mystified, while Gillespie, feeling in his pocket for his pipe, caught my eye and winked.

"Ah, Donovan," he said coolly, "and so you were among the admiring spectators. I hope you have formed a high opinion of my skill as a dog trainer. Once, I would have you know, I taught a Plymouth Rock rooster to turn a summersault. Are you quite alone?"

"You seem to be as big a fool as ever!" I grumbled in disgust, vexed at finding him in the neighborhood.

"Gallantly spoken, my dear fellow! You are an honor to the Irish race and mankind. Our meeting, however, is not inopportune, as they say in books; and I would

have speech with you, gentle knight. The inn, though humble, is still not without decent comforts. Will you honor me?"

He turned abruptly and led the way through the office and up the stairway, babbling nonsense less for my entertainment, I imagined, than for the befuddlement of the landlord, who leaned heavily upon his scant desk and watched our ascent.

He opened a door, and lighted several oil lamps, which disclosed three connecting rooms.

"You see, I got tired of living in the woods, and the farmer I boarded with did not understand my complex character. The absurd fellow thought me insane—can you imagine it?"

"It's a pity he didn't turn you over to the sheriff," I growled.

"Generously spoken! But I came here and hired most of this inn to be near the telegraph office. Though as big a fool as you care to call me I nevertheless look to my buttons. The hook-and-eye people are formidable competitors, and the button may in time become obsolete—stranger things have happened. I keep in touch with our main office, and when I don't feel very good I fire somebody. Only this morning I bounced our gen-

eral manager by wire for sending me a letter in purple type-writing; I had warned him, you understand, that he was to write to me in black. But it was only a matter of time with that fellow. He entered a bull pup against mine in the Westchester Bench Show last spring and took the ribbon away from me. I really couldn't stand for that. In spite of my glassy splash in the asparagus bed, I'm a man who looks to his dignity, Donovan. Will you smoke?"

I lighted my pipe and encouraged him to go on.

"How long have you been in this bake-oven?"

"I moved in this morning—you are my first pilgrim. I have spent the long hot day in getting settled. I had to throw out the furniture and buy new stuff of the local emporium, where, it depressed me to learn, furniture for the dead is supplied even as for the living. That chair, which I beg you to accept, stood next in the shop to a coffin suitable for a carcass of about your build, old man. But don't let the suggestion annoy you! I read your book on tiger hunting a few years ago with pleasure, and I'm sure you enjoy a charmed life.

"I myself," he continued, taking a chair near me and placing his feet in an open window, "am cursed with rugged health. I have quite recovered from those unkind

cuts at the nunnery—thanks to your ministrations—and am willing to put on the gloves with you at any time."

"You do me great honor; but the affair must wait for a lower temperature."

"As you will! It is not like my great and gracious ways to force a fight. Pardon me, but may I inquire for the health of the ladies at Saint What's-her-name's?"

"They are quite well, thank you."

"I am glad to know it;"—and his tone lost for the moment its jauntiness. "Henry Holbrook has gone to New York."

"Good riddance!" I exclaimed heartily. "And now—"

"—And now if I would only follow suit, everything would be joy plus for you!"

He laughed and slapped his knees at my discomfiture, for he had read my thoughts exactly.

"You certainly are the only blot on the landscape!"

"Quite so. And if I would only go hence the pretty little idyl that is being enacted in the delightful garden, under the eye of a friendly chaperon, would go forward without interruption."

He spoke soberly, and I had observed that when he dropped his chaff a note of melancholy crept into his

talk. He folded his arms and went on: "She's a wonderful girl, Donovan. There's no other girl like her in all the wide world. I tell you it's hard for a girl like that to be in her position—the whole family broken up, and that contemptible father of hers hanging about with his schemes of plunder. It's pitiful, Donovan; it's pitiful!"

"It's a cheerless mess. It all came after the bank failure, I suppose."

"Practically, though the brothers never got on. You see my governor was bit by their bank failure; and Miss Pat resented the fact that he backed off when stung. But the Gillespies take their medicine; father never squealed, which makes me sore that your Aunt Pat gives me the icy eye."

"Their affairs are certainly mixed," I remarked noncommittally.

"They are indeed; and I have studied the whole business until my near mind is mussed up, like scrambled eggs. Your own pretty idyl of the nunnery garden adds the note *piquante*. Cross my palm with gold and I'll tell you of strange things that lie in the future. I have an idea, Donovan; singular though it seem, I've a notion in my head."

"Keep it," I retorted, "to prevent a cranial vacuum."

"Crushed! Absolutely crushed!" he replied gloomily. "Kick me. I'm only the host."

We were silent while the few sounds of the village street droned in. He rose and paced the floor to shake off his mood, and when he sat down he seemed in better spirits.

"Holbrook will undoubtedly return," I said.

"Yes; there's no manner of doubt about that."

"And then there will be more trouble."

"Of course."

"But I suppose there's no guessing when he will come back."

"He will come back as soon as he's spent his money."

I felt a delicacy about referring to that transaction on the pier. It was a wretched business, and I now realized that the shame of it was not lost on Gillespie.

"How does Henry come to have that Italian scoundrel with him?" I asked after a pause.

"He's the skipper of the *Stiletto*," Gillespie replied readily.

"He's a long way from tide-water," I remarked. "A blackguard of just his sort once sailed me around the Italian peninsula in a felucca, and saved me from drowning on the way. His heroism was not, however,

wholly disinterested. When we got back to Naples he robbed me of my watch and money-belt and I profited by the transaction, having intended to give him double their value. But there are plenty of farm-boys around the lake who could handle the *Stiletto*. Henry didn't need a dago expert."

The mention of the Italian clearly troubled Gillespie. After a moment he said:

"He may be holding on to Henry instead of Henry's holding on to him. Do you see?"

"No; I don't."

"Well, I have an idea that the dago knows something that's valuable. Last summer Henry went cruising in the Sound with a pretty rotten crowd, poker being the chief diversion. A man died on the boat before they got back to New York. The report was that he fell down a hatchway when he was drunk, but there were some ugly stories in the papers about it. That Italian sailor was one of the crew."

"Where is he now?"

"Over at Battle Orchard. He knows his man and knows he'll be back. I'm waiting for Henry, too. Helen gave him twenty thousand dollars. The way the market is running he's likely to go broke any day. He plays

stocks like a crazy man, and after he's busted he'll be back on our hands."

"It's hard on Miss Pat."

"And it's harder on Helen. She's in terror all the time for fear her father will go up against the law and bring further disgrace on the family. There's her Uncle Arthur, a wanderer on the face of the earth for *his* sins. That was bad enough without the rest of it."

"That was greed, too, wasn't it?"

"No, just general cussedness. He blew in the Holbrook bank and skipped."

These facts I had gathered before, but they seemed of darker significance now, as we spoke of them in the dimly lighted room of the squalid inn. I recalled a circumstance that had bothered me earlier, but which I had never satisfactorily explained, and I determined to sound Gillespie in regard to it.

"You told me that Henry Holbrook found his way here ahead of you. How do you account for that?"

He looked at me quickly, and rose, again pacing the narrow room.

"I don't! I wish I could!"

"It's about the last place in the world to attract him. Port Annandale is a quiet resort frequented by western

people only. There's neither hunting nor fishing worth mentioning; and a man doesn't come from New York to Indiana to sail a boat on a thimbleful of water like this lake."

"You are quite right."

"If Helen Holbrook gave him warning that they were coming here—"

He wheeled on me fiercely, and laid his hand roughly on my shoulder.

"Don't you dare say it! She couldn't have done it! She wouldn't have done it! I tell you I know, independently of her, that he was here before Father Stoddard ever suggested this place to Miss Pat."

"Well, you needn't get so hot about it."

"And you needn't insinuate that she is not acting honorably in this affair! I should think that after making love to her, as you have been doing, and playing the rôle of comforter to Miss Pat, you would have the decency not to accuse her of connivance with Henry Holbrook."

"You let your jealousy get the better of your good sense. I have not been making love to Miss Holbrook!" I declared angrily and knew in my heart that I lied.

"Well, Irishman," he exclaimed with entire good

humor; "let us not bring up mine host to find us locked in mortal combat."

"What the devil *did* you bring me up here for?" I demanded.

"Oh, just to enjoy your society. I get lonesome sometimes. I tell you a man does get lonesome in this world, when he has nothing to lean on but a blooming button factory and a stepmother who flits among the world's expensive sanatoria. I know you have never had 'Button, button, who's got the button?' chanted in your ears, but may I ask whether you have ever known the joy of a stepmother? I can see that your answer will be an unregretful negative."

He was quite the fool again, and stared at me vacuously.

"My stepmother is not the common type of juvenile fiction. She has never attempted during her widowhood to rob the orphan or to poison him. Bless your Irish heart, no! She's a good woman, and rich in her own right, but I couldn't stand her dietary. She's afraid I'm going to die, Donovan! She thinks everybody's going to die. Father died of pneumonia and she said ice-water in the finger-bowl did it, and she wanted to have the butler arrested for murder. She had a new disease for

me every morning. It was worse than being left with a button-works to draw a stepmother like that. She ate nothing but hot water and zweibach herself, and shuddered when I demanded sausage and buckwheat cakes every day. She wept and talked of the duty she owed to my poor dead father; she had promised him, she said, to safeguard my health; and there I was, as strong as an infant industry, weighed a hundred and seventy-six pounds when I was eighteen, and had broken all the prep school records. She made me so nervous talking about her symptoms, and mine—that I didn't have!—that I began taking my real meals in the gardener's house. But to save her feelings I munched a little toast with her. She caught me one day clearing up a couple of chickens and a mug of bass with the gardener, and it was all over. She had noticed, she said, that I had been coughing of late—I was doing a few cigarettes too many, that was all—and wired to New York for doctors. She had all sorts, Donovan—alienists and pneumogastric specialists and lung experts.

"The people on Strawberry Hill thought there was a medical convention in town. I was kidnapped on the golf course, where I was about to win the eastern Connecticut long-drive cup, and locked up in a dark room

at home for two days while they tested me. They made all the known tests, Donovan. They tested me for diseases that haven't been discovered yet, and for some that have been extinct since the days of Noah. You can see where that put me. I was afraid to fight or sulk for fear the alienists would send me to the madhouse. I was afraid to eat for fear they would think *that* was a symptom, and every time I asked for food the tapeworm man looked intelligent and began prescribing, while the rest of them were terribly chagrined because they hadn't scored first. The only joy I got out of the rumpus was in hitting one of those alienists a damned hard clip in the ribs, and I'm glad I did it. He was feeling my medulla oblongata at the moment, and as I resent being man-handled I pasted him one—he was a young chap, and fair game—I pasted him one, and then grabbed a suit-case and slid. I stole away in a clam-boat for New Haven, and kept right on up into northern Maine, where I stayed with the Indians until my father's relict went off broken-hearted to Bad Neuheim to drink the waters. And here I am, by the grace of God, in perfect health and in full control of the button market of the world."

"You have undoubtedly been sorely tried," I said as

he broke off mournfully. In spite of myself I had been entertained. He was undeniably a fellow of curious humor and with unusual experience of life. He followed me to the street, and as I rode away he called me back as though to impart something of moment.

"Did you ever meet Charles Darwin?"

"He didn't need me for proof, Buttons."

"I wish I might have had one word with him. It's on my mind that he put the monkeys back too far. I should be happier if he had brought them a little nearer up to date. I should feel less lonesome, Irishman."

He stopped me again.

"Once I had an ambition to find an honest man, Donovan, but I gave it up—it's easier to be an honest man than to find one. I give you peace!"

I had learned some things from the young button king, but much was still opaque in the affairs of the Holbrooks. The Italian's presence assumed a new significance from Gillespie's story. He had been party to a conspiracy to kill Holbrook, alias Hartridge, on the night of my adventure at the house-boat, and I fell to wondering who had been the shadowy director of that enterprise—the coward who had hung off in the creek and waited for the evil deed to be done.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GATE OF DREAMS

And as I muse on Helen's face,
Within the firelight's ruddy shine,
Its beauty takes an olden grace
Like hers whose fairness was divine;
The dying embers leap, and lo!
Troy wavers vaguely all aglow,
And in the north wind leashed without,
I hear the conquering Argives' shout;
And Helen feeds the flames as long ago!

—Edward A. U. Valentine.

In my heart I was anxious to do justice to Gillespie. Sad it is that we are all so given to passing solemn judgment on trifling testimony! I myself am not impeccable. I should at any time give to the lions a man who uses his thumb as a paper-cutter; for such a one is clearly marked for brutality. Spats I always associate with vanity and a delicate constitution. A man who does not know the art of nursing a pipe's fire, but who has constant recourse to the match-box, should be denied benefit of clergy and the consolations of religion and tobacco. A woman who is so far above the vanities of

this world that she can put on her hat without the aid of the mirror is either reckless or slouchy—both unbecoming enough—or else of an humility that is neither admirable nor desirable. My prejudices rally as to a trumpet-call at the sight of a girl wearing overshoes or nibbling bonbons—the one suggestive of predatory habits and weak lungs, the other of nervous dyspepsia.

The night was fine, and after returning my horse to the stable I continued on to the Glenarm boat-house. I was strolling along, pipe in mouth, and was half-way up the boat-house steps, when a woman shrank away from the veranda rail, where she had been standing, gazing out upon the lake. There was no mistaking her. She was not even disguised to-night, and as I advanced across the little veranda she turned toward me. The lantern over the boat-house door suffused us both as I greeted her.

"Pardon me, Miss Holbrook; I'm afraid I have disturbed your meditations," I said. "But if you don't mind—"

"You have the advantage of being on your own ground," she replied.

"I waive all my rights as tenant if you will remain."

"It is much nicer here than on St. Agatha's pier; you

can see the lake and the stars better. On the whole," she laughed, "I think I shall stay a moment longer, if you will tolerate me."

I brought out some chairs and we sat down by the rail, where we could look out upon the star-sown heavens and the dark floor of stars beneath. The pier lights shone far and near like twinkling jewels, and in the tense silence sounds floated from far across the water. A canoeing party drifted idly by, with a faint, listless splash of paddles, while a deep-voiced boy sang, *I rise from dreams of thee.* A moment later the last bars stole softly across to us, vague and shadowy, as though from the heart of night itself.

Helen bent forward with her elbows resting on the rail, her hands clasped under her chin. The lamplight fell full upon her slightly lifted head, and upon her shoulders, over which lay a filmy veil. She hummed the boy's song dreamily for a moment while I watched her. Had she one mood for the day and another for the night? I had last seen her that afternoon after an hour of tennis, at which she was expert, and she had run away through Glenarm gate with a taunt for my defeat; but now the spirit of stars and of all earth's silent things was upon her. I looked twice and thrice at her

clearly outlined profile, at the brow with its point of dark hair, at the hand whereon the emerald was clearly distinguishable, and satisfied myself that there could be no mistake about her.

"You grow bold," I said, anxious to hear her voice. "You don't mind the pickets a bit."

"No. I'm quite superior to walls and fences. You have heard of those East Indians who appear and disappear through closed doors; well, we'll assume that I had one of those fellows for an ancestor! It will save the trouble of trying to account for my exits and entrances. I will tell you in confidence, Mr. Donovan, that I don't like to be obliged to account for myself!"

She sat back in the chair and folded her arms. I had not referred in any way to her transaction with Gillespie; I had never intimated even remotely that I knew of her meeting with the infatuated young fellow on St. Agatha's pier; and I felt that those incidents were ancient history.

"It was corking hot this afternoon. I hope you didn't have too much tennis."

"No; it was pretty enough fun," she remarked, with so little enthusiasm that I laughed.

"You don't seem to recall your victory with particular

pleasure. It seems to me that I am the one to be shy of the subject. How did that score stand?"

"I really forget—I honestly do," she laughed.

"That's certainly generous, but don't you remember, as we walked along toward the gate after the game, that you said—"

"Oh, I can't allow that at all! What I said yesterday or to-day is of no importance now. And particularly at night I am likely to be weak-minded, and my memory is poorer then than at any other time."

"I am fortunate in having an excellent memory."

"For example?"

"For example, you are not always the same; you were different this afternoon; and I must go back to our meeting by the seat on the bluff, for the Miss Holbrook of to-night."

"That's all in your imagination, Mr. Donovan. Now, if you wanted to prove that I'm really—"

"Helen Holbrook," I supplied, glad of a chance to speak her name.

"If you wanted to prove that I am who I am," she continued, with new animation, as though at last something interested her, "how should you go about it?"

"Please ask me something difficult! There is, there

could be, only one woman as fair, as interesting, as wholly charming."

"I suppose that is the point at which you usually bow humbly and wait for applause; but I scorn to notice anything so commonplace. If you were going to prove me to be the same person you met at the Annandale station, how should you go about it?"

"Well, to be explicit, you walk like an angel."

"You are singularly favored in having seen angels walk, Mr. Donovan. There's a popular superstition that they fly. In my own ignorance I can't concede that your point is well taken. What next?"

"Your head is like an intaglio wrought when men had keener vision and nimbler fingers than now. With your hair low on your neck, as it is to-night, the picture carries back to a Venetian balcony centuries ago."

"That's rather below standard. What else, please?"

"And that widow's peak—I would risk the direst penalties of perjury in swearing to it alone."

She shrugged her shoulders. "You are an observant person. That trifling mark on a woman's forehead is usually considered a disfigurement."

"But you know well enough that I did not mention it with such a thought. You know it perfectly well."

"No; foolish one," she said mockingly, "the widow's peak can not be denied. I suppose you don't know that the peak sometimes runs in families. My mother had it, and her mother before her."

"You are not your mother or your grandmother; so I am not in danger of mistaking you."

"Well, what else, please?"

"There's the emerald. Miss Pat has the same ring, but you are not Miss Pat. Besides, I have seen you both together."

"Still, there are emeralds and emeralds!"

"And then—there are your eyes!"

"There are two of them, Mr. Donovan!"

"There need be no more to assure light in a needful world, Miss Holbrook."

"Good! You really have possibilities!"

She struck her palms together in a mockery of applause and laughed at me.

"To a man who is in love everything is possible," I dared.

"The Celtic temperament is very susceptible. You have undoubtedly likened many eyes to the glory of the heavens."

"I swear—"

"Swear not at all!"

"Then I won't!"—and we laughed and were silent while the water rippled in the reeds, the insects wove their woof of sound and ten struck musically from St. Agatha's.

"I must leave you."

"If you go you leave an empty world behind."

"Oh, that was pretty!"

"Thank you!"

"Conceited! I wasn't approving your remark, but that meteor that flashed across the sky and dropped into the woods away out yonder."

"Alas! I have fallen farther than the meteor and struck the earth harder."

"You deserved it," she said, rising and drawing the veil about her throat.

"My lack of conceit has always been my undoing; I am the humblest man alive. You are adorable," I said, "if that's the answer."

"It isn't the answer! If mere stars do this to you, what would you be in moonlight?"

As we stood facing each other I was aware of some new difference in her. Perhaps her short outing skirt of dark blue had changed her; and yet in our tramps

through the woods and our excursions in the canoe she had worn the same or similar costumes. She hesitated a moment, leaning against the railing and tapping the floor with her boot; then she said gravely, half questioningly, as though to herself:

"He has gone away; you are quite sure that he has gone away?"

"Your father is probably in New York," I answered, surprised at the question. "I do not expect him back at once."

"If he should come back—" she began.

"He will undoubtedly return; there is no debating that."

"If he comes back there will be trouble, worse than anything that has happened. You can't understand what his return will mean to us—to me."

"You must not worry about that; you must trust me to take care of that when he comes. 'Sufficient unto the day' must be your watchword. I saw Gillespie tonight."

"Gillespie?" she repeated with unfeigned surprise.

"That was capitally acted!" I laughed. "I wish I knew that he meant nothing more to you than that!" I added seriously.

She colored, whether with anger or surprise at my swift change of tone, I did not know. Then she said very soberly:

"Mr. Gillespie is nothing to me whatever."

"I thank you for that!"

"Thank me for nothing, Mr. Donovan. And now good night. You are not to follow me—"

"Oh, surely to the gate!"

"Not even to the gate. My ways are very mysterious. By day I am one person; by night quite another. And if you should follow me—"

"To my own gate!" I pleaded. "It's only decent hospitality!" I urged.

"Not even to the Gate of Dreams!"

"But in trying to get back to the school you have to pass the guards; you will fail at that some time!"

"No! I whisper an incantation, and lo! they fall asleep upon their spears. And I must ask you—"

"Keep asking, for to ask you must stay!"

"—please, when I meet you in daytime do not refer to anything that we may say when we meet at night. You have proved me at every point—even to this spot of ink on my forehead," and she put her forefinger upon the peak. "I am Helen Holbrook; but as—what shall I

say?—oh, yes!" she went on lightly—"as a psychological fact, I am very different at night from anything I ever am in daylight. And to-morrow morning, when you meet me with Aunt Pat in the garden, if you should refer to this meeting I shall never appear to you again, not even through the Gate of Dreams. Good night!"

"Good night!"

I clasped her hand for an instant, and she met my eyes with a laughing challenge.

"When shall I see you again—this you that is so different from the you of daylight?"

She caught her hand away and turned to go, but paused at the steps.

"When the new moon hangs, like a little feather, away out yonder, I shall be looking at it from the stone seat on the bluff; do you think you can remember?"

She vanished away into the wood toward St. Agatha's. I started to follow, but paused, remembering my promise, and sat down and yielded myself to the thought of her. Practical questions of how she managed to slip out of St. Agatha's vexed me for a moment; but in my elation of spirit I dismissed them quickly enough. I would never again entertain an evil thought of her; the money she had taken from Gillespie I would in some

way return to him and make an end of any claim he might assert against her by reason of that help. And I resolved to devote myself diligently to the business of protecting her from her father. I was even impatient for him to return and resume his blackguardly practice of intimidating two helpless women, that I might deal with him in the spirit of his own despicable actions.

My heart was heavy as I thought of him, but I lighted my pipe and found at once a gentler glory in the stars. Then as I stared out upon the lake I saw a shadow gliding softly away from the little promontory where St. Agatha's pier lights shone brightly. It was a canoe, I should have known from its swift steady flight if I had not seen the paddler's arm raised once, twice, until darkness fell upon the tiny argosy like a cloak. I ran out on the pier and stared after it, but the silence of the lake was complete. Then I crossed the strip of wood to St. Agatha's, and found Ijima and the gardener faithfully patrolling the grounds.

"Has any one left the buildings to-night?"

"No one."

"Sister Margaret hasn't been out—or any one?"

"No one, sir. Did you hear anything, sir?"

"Nothing, Ijima. Good night."

I wrote a telegram to an acquaintance in New York who knows everybody, and asked him to ascertain whether Henry Holbrook, of Stamford, was in New York. This I sent to Annandale, and thereafter watched the stars from the terrace until they slipped into the dawn, fearful lest sleep might steal away my memories and dreams of the night.

CHAPTER XIV

BATTLE ORCHARD

We crossed the lake from the south and about nightfall came to the small island called Battle Orchard, which is so named by the American settlers from the peach, apple and other trees planted there about 1740 (so many have told me) by François Belot, a French voyageur who had crossed from the Ouabache on his way from Quebec to Post Vincennes near the Ohio, and, finding the beaver plentiful, brought there his family. And here the Indians laid siege to him; and here he valiantly defended the ford on the west side of the little isle for three days, killing many savages before they slew him.

—*The Relation of Captain Abel Tucker.*

When I called at St. Agatha's the following morning the maid told me that Miss Pat was ill and that Miss Helen asked to be excused. I walked restlessly about the grounds until luncheon, thinking Helen might appear; and later determined to act on an impulse, with which I had trifled for several days, to seek the cottage on the Tippecanoe and satisfy myself of Holbrook's absence. A sharp shower had cooled the air, and I took the canoe for greater convenience in running into the

shallow creek. I know nothing comparable to paddling as a lifter of the spirit, and with my arms and head bared and a cool breeze at my back I was soon skimming along as buoyant of heart as the responsive canoe beneath me. It was about four o'clock when I dipped my way into the farther lake, and as the water broadened before me at the little strait I saw the *Stiletto* lying quietly at anchor off the eastern shore of Battle Orchard. I drew close to observe her the better, but there were no signs of life on board, and I paddled to the western side of the island.

It had already occurred to me that Holbrook might have another hiding-place than the cottage at Red Gate, where I had talked with him, and the island seemed a likely spot for it. I ran my canoe on the pebbly beach and climbed the bank. The island was covered with a tangle of oak and maple, with a few lordly sycamores towering above all. I followed a path that led through the underbrush and was at once shut in from the lake. The trail bore upward and I soon came upon a small clearing about an acre in extent that had once been tilled, but it was now preëmpted by weeds as high as my head. Beyond lay an ancient orchard, chiefly of apple-trees, and many hoary veterans stood faithful to the

brave hand that had marshaled them there. (Every orchard is linked to the Hesperides and every apple waits for Atalanta—if not for Eve!) I stooped to pick a wild-flower and found an arrow-head lying beside it.

Fumbling the arrow-head in my fingers, I passed on to a log cabin hidden away in the orchard. It was evidently old. The mud chinking had dropped from the logs in many places, and the stone chimney was held up by a sapling. I approached warily, remembering that if this were Holbrook's camp and he had gone away he had probably left the Italian to look after the yacht, which could be seen from the cabin door. I made a circuit of the cabin without seeing any signs of habitation, and was about to enter by the front door, when I heard the swish of branches in the underbrush to the east and dropped into the grass.

In a moment the Italian appeared, carrying a pair of oars over his shoulder. He had evidently just landed, as the blades were dripping. He threw them down by the cabin door, came round to the western window, drew out the pin from an iron staple with which it was fastened, and thrust his head in. He was greeted with a howl and a loud demand of some sort, to which he replied in monosyllables, and after several minutes of this parley

I caught a fragment of dialogue which seemed to be final in the subject under discussion.

"Let me out or it will be the worse for you; let me out, I say!"

"My boss he sometime come back; then you get out it, maybe."

With this deliverance, accomplished with some difficulty, the Italian turned away, going to the rear of the cabin for a pail with which he trudged off toward the lake. He had not closed the window and would undoubtedly return in a few minutes; so I waited until he was out of sight, then rose and crawled through the grass to the opening.

I looked in upon a bare room whose one door opened inward, and I did not for a moment account for the voice. Then something stirred in the farther corner, and I slowly made out the figure of a man tied hand and foot, lying on his back in a pile of grass and leaves.

"You ugly dago! you infernal pirate—" he bawled.

There was no mistaking that voice, and I now saw two legs clothed in white duck that belonged, I was sure, to Gillespie. My head and shoulders filled the window and so darkened the room that the prisoner thought his jailer had come back to torment him.

"Shut up, Gillespie," I muttered. "This is Donovan. That fellow will be back in a minute. What can I do for you?"

"What can you do for me?" he spluttered. "Oh, nothing, thanks! I wouldn't have you put yourself out for anything in the world. It's nice in here, and if that fellow kills me I'll miss a great deal of the poverty and hardship of this sinful world. But take your time, Irishman. Being tied by the legs like a calf is bully when you get used to it."

In turning over, the better to level his ironies at me, he had stirred up the dust in the straw so that he sneezed and coughed in a ridiculous fashion. As I did not move he added:

"You come in here and cut these strings and I'll tell you something nice some day."

I ran round to the front door, kicked it open and passed through a square room that contained a fireplace, a camp bed, a trunk, and a table littered with old newspapers and a few books. I found Gillespie in the adjoining room, cut his thongs and helped him to his feet.

"Where is your boat?" he demanded.

"On the west side."

"Then we're in for a scrap. That beggar goes down

there for water; and he'll see that there's another man on the island. I had a gun when I came," he added mournfully.

He stamped his feet and threshed himself with his arms to restore circulation, then we went into the larger room, where he dug his own revolver from the trunk and pointed to a shot-gun in the corner.

"You'd better get that. This fellow has only a knife in his clothes. He'll be back on the run when he sees your canoe." And we heard on the instant a man running toward the hut. I opened the breech of the shot-gun to see whether it was loaded.

"Well, how do you want to handle the situation?" I asked.

He had his eye on the window and threw up his revolver and let go.

"Your pistol makes a howling noise, Gillespie. Please don't do that again. The smoke is disagreeable."

"You are quite right; and shooting through glass is always unfortunate! there's bound to be a certain deflection before the bullet strikes. You see if I were not a fool I should be a philosopher."

"It isn't nice here; we'd better bolt."

"I'm as hungry as a sea-serpent," he said, watching

the window. "And I am quite desperate when I miss my tea."

I stood before the open door and he watched the window. We were both talking to cover our serious deliberations. Our plight was not so much a matter for jesting as we wished to make it appear to each other. I had experienced one struggle with the Italian at the houseboat on the Tippecanoe and was not anxious to get within reach of his knife again. I did not know how he had captured Gillespie, or what mischief that amiable person had been engaged in, but inquiries touching this matter must wait.

"Are you ready? We don't want to shoot unless we have to. Now when I say go, jump for the open."

He limped a little from the cramping of his legs, but crossed over to me cheerfully enough. His white trousers were much the worse for contact with the cabin floor, and his shirt hung from his shoulders in ribbons.

"My stomach bids me haste; I'm going to eat a beefsteak two miles thick if I ever get back to New York. Are you waiting?"

We were about to spring through the outer door, when the door at the rear flew open with a bang and the sailor landed on me with one leap. I went down with

a thump and a crack of my head on the floor that sickened me. The gun was under my legs, and I remember that my dazed wits tried to devise means for getting hold of it. As my senses gradually came round I was aware of a great conflict about me and over me. Gillespie was engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the sailor and the cabin shook with their strife. The table went down with a crash, and Gillespie seemed to be having the best of it; then the Italian was afoot again, and the clenched swaying figures crashed against the trunk at the farther end of the room. And there they fought in silence, save for the scraping of their feet on the puncheon floor. I felt a slight nausea from the smash my head had got, but I began crawling across the floor toward the struggling men. It was growing dark, and they were knit together against the cabin wall like a single monstrous, swaying figure.

My stomach was giving a better account of itself, and I got to my knees and then to my feet. I was within a yard of the wavering shadow and could distinguish Gillespie by his white trousers as he wrenched free and flung the Italian away from him; and in that instant of freedom I heard the dull impact of Gillespie's fist in the brute's face. As the sailor went down I threw my-

self full length upon him; but for the moment at least he was out of business, and before I had satisfied myself that I had firmly grasped him, Gillespie, blowing hard, was kneeling beside me, with a rope in his hands.

"I think," he panted, "I should like champignon sauce with that steak, Donovan. And I should like my potatoes lyonnaise—the pungent onion is a spurring tonic. That will do, thanks, for the arms. Get off his legs and I'll see what I can do for them. You oughtn't to have cut that rope, my boy. You might have known that we were going to need it. My father taught me in my youth never to cut a string. I want the pirate's knife for a souvenir. I kicked it out of his hand when you went bumpety-bumpety. How's your head?"

"I still have it. Let's get you outside and have a look at you. You think he didn't land with the knife?"

"Not a bit of it. He nearly squeezed the life out of me two or three times, though. What's that?"

"He gave me a jab with his sticker when he made that flying leap and I guess I'm scratched."

Gillespie opened my shirt and disclosed a scratch across my ribs downward from the left collar bone. The first jab had struck the bone, but the subsequent slash had left a nasty red line.

Gillespie swore softly in the strange phrases that he affected while he tended my injury. My head ached and the nausea came back occasionally. I sat down in the grass while Gillespie found the sailor's pail and went to fetch water. He found some towels in the hut and between his droll chaffing and his deft ministrations I soon felt fit again.

"Well, what shall we do with the dago?" he asked, rubbing his arms and legs briskly.

"We ought to give him to the village constable."

"That's the law of it, but not the common sense. The lords of justice would demand to know all the whys and wherefores, and the Italian consul at Chicago would come down and make a fuss, and the man behind the dago would lay low and no good would come."

"When will Holbrook be back?—that's the question."

"Well, the market has been very feverish and my guess is that he won't last many days. He had a weakness for Industrials, as I remember, and they've been very groggy. What he wants is his million from Miss Pat, and he has his own chivalrous notions of collecting it."

We decided finally to leave the man free, but to take away his boat. Gillespie was disposed to make light of

the whole affair, now that we had got off with our lives. We searched the hut for weapons and ammunition, and having collected several knives and a belt and revolver from the trunk, we poured water on the Italian, carried him into the open and loosened the ropes with which Gillespie had tied him.

The man glared at us fiercely and muttered incoherently for a few minutes, but after Gillespie had dashed another pail of water on him he stood up and was tame enough.

"Tell him," said Gillespie, "that we shall not kill him to-day. Tell him that this being Tuesday we shall spare his life—that we never kill any one on Tuesday, but that we shall come back to-morrow and make shark meat of him. Assure him that we are terrible villains and man-hunters—"

"When will your employer return?" I asked the sailor.

He shook his head and declared that he did not know.

"How long did he hire you for?"

"For all summer." He pointed to the sloop, and I got it out of him that he had been hired in New York to come to the lake and sail it.

"In the creek up yonder," I said, pointing toward

the Tippecanoe, "you tried to kill me. There was another man with you. Who was he?"

"That was my boss," he replied reluctantly, though his English was clear enough.

"What is your employer's name?" I demanded.

"Holbrook. I sail his boat, the *Stiletto,* over there," he replied.

"But it was not he who was with you on the house-boat in the creek. Mr. Holbrook was not there. Do not lie to me. Who was the other man that wanted you to kill Holbrook?"

He appeared mystified, and Gillespie, to whom I had told nothing of my encounter at the boat-maker's, looked from one to the other of us with a puzzled expression on his face.

"All he knows is that he's hired to sail a boat and, incidentally, stick people with his knife," said Gillespie in disgust. "We can do nothing till Holbrook comes back; let's be going."

We finally gathered up the Italian's oars, and, carrying the captured arms, went to the east shore, where we put off in Gillespie's rowboat, trailing the Italian's boat astern. The sailor followed us to the shore and watched our departure in silence. We swung round to the western

shore and got my canoe, and there again, the Italian sullenly watched us.

"He's not so badly marooned," said Gillespie. "He can walk out over here."

"No, he'll wait for Holbrook. He's stumped now and doesn't understand us. He has exhausted his orders and is sick and tired of his job. A salt-water sailor loses his snap when he gets as far inland as this. He'll demand his money when Holbrook turns up and clear out of this."

Gillespie took the oars himself, insisting that I must have a care for the slash across my chest, and so, towing the canoe and rowboat, we turned toward Glenarm. The Italian still watched us from the shore, standing beside a tall sycamore on a little promontory as though to follow us as far as possible.

We passed close to the *Stiletto* to get a better look at her. She was the trimmest sailing craft in those waters, and the largest, being, I should say, thirty-seven feet on the water-line, sloop-rigged, and with a cuddy large enough to house the skipper. As we drew alongside I stood up the better to examine her, and the Italian, still watching us intently from the island, cried out warningly.

"He should fly the signal, 'Owner not on board,'" remarked Gillespie as we pushed off and continued on our way.

The sun was low in the western wood as we passed out into the larger lake. Gillespie took soundings with his oar in the connecting channel, and did not touch bottom.

"You wouldn't suppose the *Stiletto* could get through here; it's as shallow as a sauce-pan; but there's plenty and to spare," he said, as he resumed rowing.

"But it takes a cool hand—" I began, then paused abruptly; for there, several hundred yards away, a little back from the western shore, against a strip of wood through which the sun burned redly, I saw a man and a woman slowly walking back and forth. Gillespie, laboring steadily at the oars, seemed not to see them, and I made no sign. My heart raced for a moment as I watched them pace back and forth, for there was something familiar in both figures. I knew that I had seen them before and talked with them; I would have sworn that the man was Henry Holbrook and the girl Helen; and I was aware that when they turned, once, twice, at the ends of their path, the girl made some delay; and

when they went on she was toward the lake, as though shielding the man from our observation. The last sight I had of them the girl stood with her back to us, pointing into the west. Then she put up her hand to her bare head as though catching a loosened strand of hair; and the wind blew back her skirts like those of the Winged Victory. The two were etched sharply against the fringe of wood and bathed in the sun's glow. A second later the trees stood there alertly, with the golden targe of the sun shining like a giant's shield beyond; but they had gone, and my heart was numb with foreboding, or loneliness, and heavy with the weight of things I did not understand.

Gillespie tugged hard with the burden of the tow at his back. I will not deny that I was uncomfortable as I thought of his own affair with Helen Holbrook. He had, by any fair judgment, a prior claim. Her equivocal attitude toward him and her inexplicable conduct toward her aunt were, I knew, appearing less and less heinous to me as the days passed; and I was miserably conscious that my own duty to Miss Patricia lay less heavily upon me.

I was glad when we reached Glenarm pier, where we found Ijima hanging out the lamps. He gave me a tel-

egram. It was from my New York acquaintance and read:

Holbrook left here two days ago; destination unknown.

"Come, Gillespie; you are to dine with me," I said, when he had read the telegram; and so we went up to the house together.

CHAPTER XV

I UNDERTAKE A COMMISSION

Sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

—*Tennyson.*

Gillespie availed himself of my wardrobe to replace his rags, and appeared in the library clothed and in his usual state of mind on the stroke of seven.

"You should have had the doctor out, Donovan. Being stuck isn't so funny, and you will undoubtedly die of blood-poisoning. Every one does nowadays."

"I shall disappoint you. Ijima and I between us have stuck me together like a cracked plate. And it is not well to publish our troubles to the world. If I called the village doctor he would kill his horse circulating the mysterious tidings. Are you satisfied?"

"Quite so. You're a man after my own heart, Donovan."

We had reached the dining-room and stood by our chairs.

"I should like," he said, taking up his cocktail glass, "to propose a truce between us—"

"In the matter of a certain lady?"

"Even so! On the honor of a fool," he said, and touched his glass to his lips. "And may the best man win," he added, putting down the glass unemptied.

He was one of those comfortable people with whom it is possible to sit in silence; but after intervals in which we found nothing to say he would, with exaggerated gravity, make some utterly inane remark. To-night his mind was more agile than ever, his thoughts leaping nimbly from crag to crag, like a mountain goat. He had traveled widely and knew the ways of many cities; and of American political characters, whose names were but vaguely known to me, he discoursed with delightful intimacy; then his mind danced away to a tour he had once made with a company of acrobats whose baggage he had released from the grasping hands of a rural sheriff.

"What," he asked presently, "is as sad as being deceived in a person you have admired and trusted? I knew a fellow who was professor of something in a

blooming college, and who was so poor that he had to coach delinquent preps in summer-time instead of getting a vacation. I had every confidence in that fellow. I thought he was all right, and so I took him up into Maine with me—just the two of us—and hired an Indian to run our camp, and everything pointed to plus. Well, I always get stung when I try to be good."

He placed his knife and fork carefully across his plate and sighed deeply.

"What was the matter? Did he bore you with philosophy?"

"No such luck. That man was weak-minded on the subject of domesticating prairie-dogs. You may shoot me if that isn't the fact. There he was, a prize-winner and a fellow of his university, and a fine scholar who edited Greek text-books, with that thing on his mind. He held that the daily example of the happy home life of the prairie-dog would tend to ennoble all mankind and brighten up our family altars. Think of being lost in the woods with a man with such an idea, and of having to sleep under the same blanket with him! It rained most of the time so we had to sit in the tent, and he never let up. He got so bad that he would wake me up in the night to talk prairie-dog."

"It must have been trying," I agreed. "What was your solution, Buttons?"

"I moved outdoors and slept with the Indian. Your salad dressing is excellent, Donovan, though personally I lean to more of the paprika. But let us go back a bit to the Holbrooks. Omitting the lady, there are certain points about which we may as well agree. I am not so great a fool but that I can see that this state of things can not last forever. Henry is broken down from drink and brooding over his troubles, and about ready for close confinement in a brick building with barred windows."

"Then I'm for capturing him and sticking him away in a safe place."

"That's the Irish of it, if you will pardon me; but it's not the Holbrook of it. A father tucked away in a private madhouse would not sound well to the daughter. I advise you not to suggest that to Helen. I generously aid your suit to that extent. We are both playing for Helen's gratitude; that's the flat of the matter."

"I was brought into this business to help Miss Pat," I declared, though a trifle lamely. Gillespie grinned sardonically.

"Be it far from me to interfere with your plans, methods or hopes. We both have the conceit of our wisdom!"

"There may be something in that."

"But it was decent of you to get me out of that Italian's clutches this afternoon. When I went over there I thought I might find Henry Holbrook and pound some sense into him; and he's about due, from that telegram. If Miss Pat won't soften her heart I'd better buy him off," he added reflectively.

We walked the long length of the hall into the library, and had just lighted our cigars when the butler sought me.

"Beg pardon, the telephone, sir."

My distrust of the telephone is so deep-seated that I had forgotten the existence of the instrument in Glenarm house, where, I now learned, it was tucked away in the butler's pantry for the convenience of the housekeeper in ordering supplies from the village. After a moment's parley a woman's voice addressed me distinctly —a voice that at once arrested and held all my thoughts. My replies were, I fear, somewhat breathless and wholly stupid.

"This is Rosalind; do you remember me?"

"Yes; I remember; I remember nothing else!" I declared. Ijima had closed the door behind me, and I was alone with the voice—a voice that spoke to me of the

summer night, and of low winds murmuring across starry waters.

"I am going away. The Rosalind you remember is going a long way from the lake, and you will never see her again."

"But you have an engagement; when the new moon—"

"But the little feather of the new moon is under a cloud, and you can not see it; and Rosalind must always be Helen now."

"But this won't do, Rosalind. Ours was more than an engagement; it was a solemn compact," I insisted.

"Oh, not so very solemn!" she laughed. "And then you have the other girl that isn't just me—the girl of the daylight, that you ride and sail with and play tennis with."

"Oh, I haven't her; I don't want her—"

"Treacherous man! Volatile Irishman!"

"Marvelous, adorable Rosalind!"

"That will do, Mr. Donovan"—and then with a quick change of tone she asked abruptly:

"You are not afraid of trouble, are you?"

"I live for nothing else!"

"You are not so pledged to the Me you play tennis with that you can not serve Rosalind if she asks it?"

"No; you have only to ask. But I must see you once more—as Rosalind!"

"Stop being silly, and listen carefully." And I thought I heard a sob in the moment's silence before she spoke.

"I want you to go, at once, to the house of the boat-maker on Tippecanoe Creek; go as fast as you can!" she implored.

"To the house of the man who calls himself Hartridge, the canoe-maker, at Red Gate?"

"Yes; you must see that no harm comes to him to-night."

There was no mistaking now the sobs that broke her sentences, and my mind was so a-whirl with questions that I stammered incoherently.

"Will you go—will you go?" she demanded in a voice so low and broken that I scarcely heard.

"Yes, at once," and the voice vanished, and while I still stood staring at the instrument the operator at Annandale blandly asked me what number I wanted. The thread had snapped and the spell was broken. I stared helplessly at the thing of wood and wire for half a minute; then the girl's appeal and my promise rose in my mind distinct from all else. I ordered my horse before returning to the library, where Gillespie was coolly

turning over the magazines on the table. I was still dazed, and something in my appearance caused him to stare.

"Been seeing a ghost?" he asked.

"No; just hearing one," I replied.

I had yet to offer some pretext for leaving him, and as I walked the length of the room he stifled a yawn, his eyes falling upon the line of French windows. I spoke of the heat of the night, but he did not answer, and I turned to find his gaze fixed upon one of the open windows.

"What is it, man?" I demanded.

He crossed the room in a leap and was out upon the terrace, peering down upon the shrubbery beneath.

"What's the row?" I demanded.

"Didn't you see it?"

"No."

"Then it wasn't anything. I thought I saw the dago, if you must know. He'll probably be around looking for us."

"Humph, you're a little nervous, that's all. You'll stay here all night, of course?" I asked, without, I fear, much enthusiasm.

He grinned.

"Don't be so cordial! If you'll send me into town I'll be off."

I had just ordered the dog-cart when the butler appeared.

"If you please, sir, Sister Margaret wishes to use our telephone, sir. St. Agatha's is out of order."

I spoke to the Sister as she left the house, half as a matter of courtesy, half to make sure of her. The telephone at St. Agatha's had been out of order for several days, she said; and I walked with her to St. Agatha's gate, talking of the weather, the garden and the Holbrook ladies, who were, she said, quite well.

Thereafter, when I had despatched Gillespie to the village in the dog-cart, I got into my leggings, reflecting upon the odd circumstance that Helen Holbrook had been able to speak to me over the telephone a few minutes before, using an instrument that had, by Sister Margaret's testimony, been out of commission for several days. The girl had undoubtedly slipped away from St. Agatha's and spoken to me from some other house in the neighborhood; but this was a matter of little importance, now that I had undertaken her commission.

The chapel clock chimed nine as I gained the road, and I walked my horse to scan St. Agatha's windows

through vistas that offered across the foliage. And there, by the open window of her aunt's sitting-room, I saw Helen Holbrook reading. A table-lamp at her side illumined her slightly bent head; and, as though aroused by my horse's quick step in the road, she rose and stood framed against the light, with the soft window draperies fluttering about her.

I spoke to my horse and galloped toward Red Gate.

CHAPTER XVI

AN ODD AFFAIR AT RED GATE

> Brother, you have a vice of mercy in you,
> Which better fits a lion than a man.
>
> —*Troilus and Cressida.*

As I rode through Port Annandale the lilting strains of a waltz floated from the casino, and I caught a glimpse of the lake's cincture of lights. My head was none too clear from its crack on the cabin floor, and my chest was growing sore and stiff from the slash of the Italian's knife; but my spirits were high, and my ears rang with memories of the Voice. Helen had given me a commission, and every fact of my life faded into insignificance compared to this. The cool night air rushing by refreshed me. I was eager for the next turn of the wheel, and my curiosity ran on to the boat-maker's house.

I came now to a lonely sweep, where the road ran through a heavy woodland, and the cool, moist air of the forest rose round me. The lake, I knew, lay close at hand,

and the Hartridge cottage was not, as I reckoned my distances, very far ahead. I had drawn in my horse to consider the manner of my approach to the boat-maker's, and was jogging along at an easy trot when a rifle-shot rang out on my left, from the direction of the creek, and my horse shied sharply and plunged on at a wild gallop. He ran several hundred yards before I could check him, and then I turned and rode slowly back, peering into the forest's black shadow for the foe. I paused and waited, with the horse dancing crazily beneath me, but the woodland presented an inscrutable front. I then rode on to the unfenced strip of wood where I had left my horse before.

I began this narrative with every intention of telling the whole truth touching my adventures at Annandale, and I can not deny that the shot from the wood had again shaken my faith in Helen Holbrook. She had sent me to the Tippecanoe on an errand of her own choosing, and I had been fired on from ambush near the place to which she had sent me. I fear that my tower of faith that had grown so tall and strong shook on its foundations; but once more I dismissed my doubts, just as I had dismissed other doubts and misgivings about her. My fleeting glimpse of her in the window

of St. Agatha's less than an hour before flashed back upon me, and the tower touched the stars, steadfast and serene again.

I strode on toward Red Gate with my revolver in the side pocket of my Norfolk jacket. A buckboard filled with young folk from the summer colony passed me, and then the utter silence of the country held the world. In a moment I had reached the canoe-maker's cottage and entered the gate. I went at once to the front door and knocked. I repeated my knock several times, but there was no answer. The front window-blinds were closed tight.

It was now half-past ten and I walked round the dark house with the sweet scents of the garden rising about me and paused again at the top of the steps leading to the creek.

The house-boat was effectually screened by shrubbery, and I had descended half a dozen steps before I saw a light in the windows. It occurred to me that as I had undoubtedly been sent to Red Gate for some purpose, I should do well not to defeat it by any clumsiness of my own; so I proceeded slowly, pausing several times to observe the lights below. I heard the Tippecanoe slipping by with the subdued murmur of water at night;

and then a lantern flashed on deck and I heard voices. Some one was landing from a boat in the creek. This seemed amiable enough, as the lantern-bearer helped a man in the boat to clamber to the platform, and from the open door of the shop a broad shaft of light shone brightly upon the two men. The man with the lantern was Holbrook, *alias* Hartridge, beyond a doubt; the other was a stranger. Holbrook caught the painter of the boat and silently made it fast.

"Now," he said, "come in."

They crossed the deck and entered the boat-maker's shop, and I crept down where I could peer in at an open port-hole. Several brass ship-lamps of an odd pattern lighted the place brilliantly, and I was surprised to note the unusual furnishings of the room. The end nearest my port-hole was a shop, with a carpenter's bench with litter all about that spoke of practical use. Two canoes in process of construction lay across frames contrived for the purpose, and overhead was a rack of lumber hung away to dry. The men remained at the farther end of the house—it was, I should say, about a hundred feet long—which, without formal division, was fitted as a sitting-room, with a piano in one corner, and a long settle against the wall. In the center was a table littered with

books and periodicals; and a woman's sewing-basket, interwoven with bright ribbons, gave a domestic touch to the place. On the inner wall hung a pair of foils and masks. Pictures from illustrated journals—striking heads or outdoor scenes—were pinned here and there.

The new-comer stared about, twirling a Tweed cap nervously in his hands, while Holbrook carefully extinguished the lantern and put it aside. His visitor was about fifty, taller than he, and swarthy, with a grayish mustache, and hair white at the temples. His eyes were large and dark, but even with the length of the room between us I marked their restlessness; and now that he spoke it was in a succession of quick rushes of words that were difficult to follow.

Holbrook pushed a chair toward the stranger and they faced each other for a moment, then with a shrug of his shoulders the older man sat down. Holbrook was in white flannels, with a blue scarf knotted in his shirt collar. He dropped into a big wicker chair, crossed his legs and folded his arms.

"Well," he said in a wholly agreeable tone, "you wanted to see me, and here I am."

"You are well hidden," said the other, still gazing about.

"I imagine I am, from the fact that it has taken you seven years to find me."

"I haven't been looking for you seven years," replied the stranger hastily; and his eyes again roamed the room.

The men seemed reluctant to approach the business that lay between them, and Holbrook wore an air of indifference, as though the impending interview did not concern him particularly. The eyes of the older man fell now upon the beribboned work-basket. He nodded toward it, his eyes lighting unpleasantly.

"There seems to be a woman," he remarked with a sneer of implication.

"Yes," replied Holbrook calmly, "there is; that belongs to my daughter."

"Where is she?" demanded the other, glancing anxiously about.

"In bed, I fancy. You need have no fear of her."

Silence fell upon them again. Their affairs were difficult, and Holbrook, waiting patiently for the other to broach his errand, drew out his tobacco-pouch and pipe and began to smoke.

"Patricia is here, and Helen is with her," said the visitor.

"Yes, we are all here, it seems," remarked Holbrook dryly. "It's a nice family gathering."

"I suppose you haven't seen them?" demanded the visitor.

"Yes and no. I have no wish to meet them; but I've had several narrow escapes. They have cut me off from my walks; but I shall leave here shortly."

"Yes, you are going, you are going—" began the visitor eagerly.

"I am going, but not until after you have gone," said Holbrook. "By some strange fate we are all here, and it is best for certain things to be settled before we separate again. I have tried to keep out of your way; I have sunk my identity; I have relinquished the things of life that men hold dear—honor, friends, ambition, and now you and I have got to have a settlement."

"You seem rather sure of yourself," sneered the older, turning uneasily in his chair.

"I am altogether sure of myself. I have been a fool, but I see the error of my ways and I propose to settle matters with you now and here. You have got to drop your game of annoying Patricia; you've got to stop using your own daughter as a spy—"

"You lie, you lie!" roared the other, leaping to his

feet. "You can not insinuate that my daughter is not acting honorably toward Patricia."

My mind had slowly begun to grasp the situation and to identify the men before me. It was as though I looked upon a miniature stage in a darkened theater, and, without a bill of the play, was slowly finding names for the players. Holbrook, *alias* Hartridge, the boat-maker of the Tippecanoe, was not Henry Holbrook, but Henry's brother, Arthur! and I sought at once to recollect what I knew of him. An instant before I had half turned to go, ashamed of eavesdropping upon matters that did not concern me; but the Voice that had sent me held me to the window. It was some such meeting as this that Helen must have feared when she sent me to the house-boat, and everything else must await the issue of this meeting.

"You had better sit down, Henry," said Arthur Holbrook quietly. "And I suggest that you make less noise. This is a lonely place, but there are human beings within a hundred miles."

Henry Holbrook paced the floor a moment and then flung himself into a chair again, but he bent forward angrily, nervously beating his hands together. Arthur went on speaking, his voice shaking with passion.

"I want to say to you that you have deteriorated until you are a common damned blackguard, Henry Holbrook! You are a blackguard and a gambler. And you have made murderous attempts on the life of your sister; you drove her from Stamford and you tried to smash her boat out here in the lake. I saw the whole transaction that afternoon, and understood it all—how you hung off there in the *Stiletto* and sent that beast to do your dirty work."

"I didn't follow her here; I didn't follow her here!" raged the other.

"No; but you watched and waited until you traced *me* here. You were not satisfied with what I had done for you. You wanted to kill me before I could tell Pat the truth; and if it hadn't been for that man Donovan your assassin would have stabbed me at my door." Arthur Holbrook rose and flung down his pipe so that the coals leaped from it. "But it's all over now—this long exile of mine, this pursuit of Pat, this hideous use of your daughter to pluck your chestnuts from the fire. By God, you've got to quit—you've got to go!"

"But I want my money—I want my money!" roared Henry, as though insisting upon a right; but Arthur ignored him, and went on.

"You were the one who was strong; and great things were expected of you, to add to the traditions of family honor; but our name is only mentioned with a sneer where men remember it at all. You were spoiled and pampered; you have never from your early boyhood had a thought that was not for yourself alone. You were always envious and jealous of anybody that came near you, and not least of me; and when I saved you, when I gave you your chance to become a man at last, to regain the respect you had flung away so shamefully, you did not realize it, you could not realize it; you took it as a matter of course, as though I had handed you a cigar. I ask you now, here in this place, where I am known and respected—I ask you here, where I have toiled with my hands, whether you forget why I am here?"

Henry Holbrook tugged at his scarf nervously and his eyes wandered about uneasily. He did not answer his brother. Arthur stood over him, with folded arms, his back to me so that I could not see his face; but his tone had in it the gathered passion and contempt of years. Then he was at once himself, standing away a little, like a lawyer after a round with a refractory witness.

"I must have my money; Patricia must make the division," replied Henry doggedly.

"Certainly! Certainly! I devoutly hope she will give it to you; you need fear no interference from me. The sooner you get it and fling it away the better. Patricia has been animated by the best motives in withholding it; she regarded it as a sacred trust to administer for your own good, but now I want you to have your money."

"If I can have my share, if you will persuade her to give it, I will pay you all I owe you—" Henry began eagerly.

"What you owe me—what you *owe* me!" and Arthur bent toward his brother and laughed—a laugh that was not good to hear. "You would give me money—money—you would pay me *money* for priceless things!"

He broke off suddenly, dropping his arms at his sides helplessly.

"There is no use in trying to talk to you; we use a different vocabulary, Henry."

"But that trouble with Gillespie—if Patricia knew—"

"Yes; if she knew the truth! And you never understood, you are incapable of understanding, that it meant

something to me to lose my sister out of my life. When Helen died"—and his voice fell and he paused for a moment, as a priest falters sometimes, gripped by some phrase in the office that touches hidden depths in his own experience, "then when Helen died there was still Patricia, the noblest sister men ever had; but you robbed me of her—you robbed me of her!"

He was deeply moved and, as he controlled himself, he walked to the little table and fingered the ribbons of the work-basket.

"I haven't those notes, if that's what you're after—I never had them," he said. "Gillespie kept tight hold of them."

"Yes; the vindictive old devil!"

"Men who have been swindled are usually vindictive," replied Arthur grimly. "Gillespie is dead. I suppose the executor of his estate has those papers; and the executor is his son."

"The fool. I've never been able to get anything out of him."

"If he's a fool it ought to be all the easier to get your pretty playthings away from him. Old Gillespie really acted pretty decently about the whole business. Your daughter may be able to get them away from the boy;

he's infatuated with her; he wants to marry her, it seems."

"My daughter is not in this matter," said Henry coldly, and then anger mastered him again. "I don't believe he has them; you have them, and that's why I have followed you here. I'm going to Patricia to throw myself on her mercy, and that ghost must not rise up against me. I want them; I have come to get those notes."

I was aroused by a shadow-like touch on my arm, and I knew without seeing who it was that stood beside me. A faint hint as of violets stole upon the air; her breath touched my cheek as she bent close to the little window, and she sighed deeply as in relief at beholding a scene of peace. Arthur Holbrook still stood with bowed head by the table, his back to his brother, and I felt suddenly the girl's hand clutch my wrist. She with her fresher eyes upon the scene saw, before I grasped it, what now occurred. Henry Holbrook had drawn a revolver from his pocket and pointed it full at his brother's back. We two at the window saw the weapon flash menacingly; but suddenly Arthur Holbrook flung round as his brother cried:

"I think you are lying to me, and I want those notes—

I want these notes, I want them now! You must have them, and I can't go to Patricia until I know they're safe."

He advanced several steps and his manner grew confident as he saw that he held the situation in his own grasp. I would have rushed in upon them but the girl held me back.

"Wait! Wait!" she whispered.

Arthur thrust his hands into the side pockets of his flannel jacket and nodded his head once or twice.

"Why don't you shoot, Henry?"

"I want those notes," said Henry Holbrook. "You lied to me about them. They were to have been destroyed. I want them now, to-night."

"If you shoot me you will undoubtedly get them much easier," said Arthur; and he lounged away toward the wall, half turning his back, while the point of the pistol followed him. "But the fact is, I never had them; Gillespie kept them."

Threats cool quickly, and I really had not much fear that Henry Holbrook meant to kill his brother; and Arthur's indifference to his danger was having its disconcerting effect on Henry. The pistol-barrel wavered; but Henry steadied himself and his clutch tightened

on the butt. I again turned toward the door, but the girl's hand held me back.

"Wait," she whispered again. "That man is a coward. He will not shoot."

The canoe-maker had been calmly talking, discussing the disagreeable consequences of murder in a tone of half-banter, and he now stood directly under the foils. Then in a flash he snatched one of them, flung it up with an accustomed hand, and snapped it across his brother's knuckles. At the window we heard the slim steel hiss through the air, followed by the rattle of the revolver as it struck the ground. The canoe-maker's foot was on it instantly; he still held the foil.

"Henry," he said in the tone of one rebuking a child, "you are bad enough, but I do not intend that you shall be a murderer. And now I want you to go; I will not treat with you; I want nothing more to do with you! I repeat that I haven't got the notes."

He pointed to the door with the foil. The blood surged angrily in his face; but his voice was in complete control as he went on.

"Your visit has awakened me to a sense of neglected duty, Henry. I have allowed you to persecute our sister without raising a hand; I have no other business now

but to protect her. Go back to your stupid sailor and tell him that if I catch him in any mischief on the lake or here I shall certainly kill him."

I lost any further words that passed between them, as Henry, crazily threatening, walked out upon the deck to his boat; then from the creek came the threshing of oars that died away in a moment. When I gazed into the room again Arthur Holbrook was blowing out the lights.

"I am grateful; I am so grateful," faltered the girl's voice; "but you must not be seen here. Please go now!" I had taken her hands, feeling that I was about to lose her; but she freed them and stood away from me in the shadow.

"We are going away—we must leave here! I can never see you again," she whispered.

In the starlight she was Helen, by every test my senses could make; but by something deeper I knew that she was not the girl I had seen in the window at St. Agatha's. She was more dependent, less confident and poised; she stifled a sob and came close. Through the window I saw Arthur Holbrook climbing up to blow out the last light.

"I could have watched myself, but I was afraid that sailor might come; and it was he that fired at you in the

road. He had gone to Glenarm to watch you and keep you away from here. Uncle Henry came back to-day and sent word that he wanted to see my father, and I asked you to come to help us."

"I thank you for that."

"And there was another man—a stranger, back there near the road; I could not make him out, but you will be careful,—please! You must think very ill of me for bringing you into all this danger and trouble."

"I am grateful to you. Please turn all your troubles over to me."

"You did what I asked you to do," she said, "when I had no right to ask, but I was afraid of what might happen here. It is all right now and we are going away; we must leave this place."

"But I shall see you again."

"No! You have—you have—Helen. You don't know me at all! You will find your mistake to-morrow."

She was urging me toward the steps that led up to the house. The sob was still in her throat, but she was laughing, a little hysterically, in her relief that her father had come off unscathed.

"Then you must let me find it out to-morrow; I will come to-morrow before you go."

"No! No! This is good-by," she said. "You would not be so unkind as to stay, when I am so troubled, and there is so much to do!"

We were at the foot of the stairway, and I heard the shop door snap shut.

"Good night, Rosalind!"

"Good-by; and thank you!" she whispered.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW THE NIGHT ENDED

One year ago my path was green,
My footstep light, my brow serene;
Alas! and could it have been so
One year ago?
There is a love that is to last
When the hot days of youth are past:
Such love did a sweet maid bestow
One year ago.
I took a leaflet from her braid
And gave it to another maid.
Love, broken should have been thy bow,
One year ago.

—*Landor.*

As my horse whinnied and I turned into the wood a man walked boldly toward me.

"My dear Donovan, I have been consoling your horse during your absence. It's a sad habit we have fallen into of wandering about at night. I liked your dinner, but you were rather too anxious to get rid of me. I came by boat myself!"

Gillespie knocked the ashes from his pipe and thrust

it into his pocket. I was in no frame of mind for talk with him, a fact which he seemed to surmise.

"It's late, for a fact," he continued; "and we both ought to be in bed; but our various affairs require diligence."

"What are you doing over here?" I demanded. I was too weary and too perplexed for his nonsense, and in no mood for confidences. I needed time for reflection and I had no intention of seeking or of imparting information at this juncture.

"Well, to tell the truth—"

"You'd better!"

"To tell the truth, my dear Donovan, since I left your hospitable board I have been deeply perplexed over some important questions of human conduct. Are you interested in human types? Have you ever noticed the man who summons all porters and waiters by the pleasing name of George? The name in itself is respectable enough; nor is its generic use pernicious—a matter of taste only. But the same man may be identified otherwise by his proneness to consume the cabinet pudding, the chocolate ice-cream and the fruit in season from the chastening American bill of fare, after partaking impartially of the preliminary fish, flesh and fowl.

He is confidential with hotel clerks, affectionate with chambermaids and all telephone girls are Nellie to him. Types, my dear Donovan—"

"That's enough! I want to know what you are doing!" and in my anger I shook him by the shoulders.

"Well, if you must have it, after I started to the village I changed my mind about going, and I was anxious to see whether Holbrook was really here; so I got a launch and came over. I stopped at the island but saw no one there, and I came up the creek until I grounded; then I struck inland, looking for the road. It might save us both embarrassment, Irishman, if we give notice of each other's intentions, particularly at night. I hung about, thinking you might appear, and—"

"You are a poor liar, Buttons. You didn't come here alone!"—and I drove my weary wits hard in an effort to account for his unexpected appearance.

"All is lost; I am discovered," he mocked.

He had himself freed my horse; I now took the rein and refastened it to the tree.

"Well, inexplicable Donovan!"

I laughed, pleased to find that my delay annoyed him. I was confident that he was not abroad at this hour for nothing, and it again occurred to me that we were on

different sides of the matter. My weariness fell from me like a cloak, as the events of the past hour flashed fresh in my mind.

"Now," I said, dropping the rein and patting the horse's nose for a moment, "you may go with me or you may sit here; but if you would avoid trouble don't try to interfere with me."

I did not doubt that he had been sent to watch me; and his immediate purpose seemed to be to detain me.

"I had hoped you would sit down and talk over the Monroe Doctrine, or the partition of Africa, or something equally interesting," he remarked. "You disappoint me, my dear benefactor."

"And you make me very tired at the end of a tiresome day, Gillespie. Please continue to watch my horse; I'm off."

He kept at my elbow, as I expected he would, babbling away with his usual volubility in an effort, now frank enough, to hold me back; but I ignored his talk and plunged on through the wood toward the creek. Henry Holbrook must, I argued, have had time enough to get out of the creek and back to the island; but what mischief Gillespie was furthering in his behalf I could not imagine.

There was a gradual rise toward the creek and we were obliged to cling to the bushes in making our ascent. Suddenly, as I paused for breath, Gillespie grasped my arm.

"For God's sake, stop! This is no affair of yours. On my honor there's nothing that affects you here."

"I will see whether there is or not!" I exclaimed, throwing him off, but he kept close beside me.

We gained the trail that ran along the creek, and I paused to listen.

"Where's your launch?"

"Find it," he replied succinctly.

I had my bearings pretty well, and set off toward the lake, Gillespie trudging behind in the narrow path. When we had gone about twenty yards a lantern glimmered below and I heard voices raised in excited colloquy. Gillespie started forward at a run.

"Keep back! This is my affair!"

"I'm making it mine," I replied, and flung in ahead of him.

I ran forward rapidly, the voices growing louder, and soon heard men stumbling and falling about in conflict. A woman's voice now rose in a sharp cry:

"Let go of him! Let go of him!"

Gillespie flashed by me down the bank to the water's edge, where the struggle ended abruptly. I was not far behind, and I saw Henry Holbrook in the grasp of the Italian, who was explaining to the woman, who held the lantern high above her head, that he was only protecting himself. Gillespie had caught hold of the sailor, who continued to protest his innocence of any wish to injure Holbrook; and for a moment we peered through the dark, taking account of one another.

"So it's you, is it?" said Henry Holbrook as the Italian freed him and his eyes fell on me. "I should like to know what you mean by meddling in my affairs. By God, I've enough to do with my own flesh and blood without dealing with outsiders."

Helen Holbrook turned swiftly and held the lantern toward me, and when she saw me shrugged her shoulders.

"You really give yourself a great deal of unnecessary concern, Mr. Donovan."

"You are a damned impudent meddler!" blurted Henry Holbrook. "I have had you watched. You—you—"

He darted toward me, but the Italian again caught and held him, and another altercation began between them. Holbrook was wrought to a high pitch of excite-

ment and cursed everybody who had in any way interfered with him.

"Come, Helen," said Gillespie, stepping to the girl's side; and at this Henry Holbrook turned upon him viciously.

"You are another meddlesome outsider. Your father was a pig—a pig, do you understand? If it hadn't been for him I shouldn't be here to-night, camping out like an outlaw. And you've got to stop annoying my daughter!"

Helen turned to the Italian and spoke to him rapidly in his own tongue.

"You must take him away. He is not himself. Tell him I have done the best I could. Tell him—"

She lowered her voice so that I heard no more. Holbrook was still heaping abuse upon Gillespie, who stood submissively by; but Helen ran up the bank, the lantern light flashing eerily about her. She paused at the top, waiting for Gillespie, who, it was patent, had brought her to this rendezvous and who kept protectingly at her heels.

The Italian drew Holbrook toward the boat that lay at the edge of the lake. He seemed to forget me in his anger against Gillespie, and he kept turning toward the path down which the girl's lantern faintly twinkled.

Gillespie kept on after the girl, the lantern flashing more rarely through the turn in the path, until I caught the threshing of his launch as it swung out into the lake.

I drew back, seeing nothing to gain by appealing to Holbrook in his present overwrought state. The Italian had his hands full, and was glad, I judged, to let me alone. A moment later he had pushed off his boat, and I heard the sound of oars receding toward the island.

I found my horse, led him deeper into the wood and threw off the saddle. Then I walked down the road until I found a barn, and crawled into the loft and slept.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LADY OF THE WHITE BUTTERFLIES

TITANIA: And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.
PEASEBLOSSOM: Hail, mortal!
—*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

The twitter of swallows in the eaves wakened me to the first light of day, and after I had taken a dip in the creek I still seemed to be sole proprietor of the world, so quiet lay field and woodland. I followed the lake shore to a fishermen's camp, where, in the good comradeship of outdoors men the world over, I got bread and coffee and no questions asked. I smoked a pipe with the fishermen to kill time, and it was still but a trifle after six o'clock when I started for Red Gate. My mood was not for the open road, and I sought woodland paths, that I might loiter the more. With squirrels scampering before me, and attended by bird-song and the morning drum-beat of the woodpecker, I strode on until I came out upon a series of rough pastures, separated by stake-

and-rider fences that crawled sinuously through tangles of blackberries and wild roses. As I tramped along a cow-path that traversed these pastures, the dew sparkled on the short grass, and wings whirred and dipped in salutation before me. My memories of the night vanished in the perfection of the day; I went forth to no renewal of acquaintance with shadows, or with the lurking figures in a dark drama, but to enchantments that were fresh with life and light. Barred gates separated these fallow fields, and I passed through one, crossed the intermediate pasture, and opened the gate of the third. Before me lay a field of daisies, bobbing amid wild grass, the morning wind softly stirring the myriad disks, so that the whole had the effect of quiet motion. The path led on again, but more faintly here. A line of sycamores two hundred yards to my right marked the bed of the Tippecanoe; and on my left hand, beyond a walnut grove, a little filmy dust-cloud hung above the hidden highway. The meadow was a place of utter peace; the very air spoke of holy things. I thrust my cap into my jacket pocket and stood watching the wind crisp the flowers. Then my attention wandered to the mad antics of a squirrel that ran along the fence.

When I turned to the field again I saw Rosalind

Three white butterflies fluttered about her head. Page 265

coming toward me along the path, clad in white, hatless, and her hands lightly brushing the lush grass that seemed to leap up to touch them. She had not seen me, and I drew back a little for love of the picture she made. Three white butterflies fluttered about her head, like an appointed guard of honor, and she caught at them with her hands, turning her head to watch their staggering flight.

She paused abruptly midway of the daisies, and I walked toward her slowly—it must have been slowly—and I think we were both glad of a moment's respite in which to study each other. Then she spoke at once, as though our meeting had been prearranged.

"I hoped I should see you," she said gravely.

"I had every intention of seeing you! I was killing time until I felt I might decently lift the latch of Red Gate."

She inspected me with her hands clasped behind her.

"Please don't look at me like that!" I laughed. "I camped in a barn last night for fear I shouldn't get here in time."

"I wish to speak to you for a few minutes—to tell you what you may have guessed about us—my father and me."

"Yes; if you like; but only to help you if I can. It is not necessary for you to tell me anything."

She turned and led the way across the daisy field. She walked swiftly, holding back her skirts from the crowding flowers, traversed the garden of Red Gate, and continued down to the house-boat.

"We can be quiet here," she said, throwing open the door. "My father is at Tippecanoe village, shipping one of his canoes. We are early risers, you see!"

The little sitting-room adjoining the shop was calm and cool, and the ripple of the creek was only an emphasis of the prevailing rural quiet. She sat down by the table in a red-cushioned wicker chair and folded her hands in her lap and smiled a little as she saw me regarding her fixedly. I suppose I had expected to find her clad in saffron robes or in doublet and hose, but the very crispness of her white piqué spoke delightfully of present times and manners. My glance rested on the emerald ring; then I looked into her eyes again.

"You see I am really very different," she smiled. "I'm not the same person at all!"

"No; it's wonderful—wonderful!" And I still stared.

She grew grave again.

"I have important things to say to you, but it's just

as well for you to see me in the broadest of daylight, so that"—she pondered a moment, as though to be sure of expressing herself clearly—"so that when you see Helen Holbrook in an hour or so in that pretty garden by the lake you will understand that it was not really Rosalind after all that—that—amused you!"

"But the daylight is not helping that idea. You are marvelously alike, and yet—" I floundered miserably in my uncertainty.

"Then,"—and she smiled at my discomfiture, "if you can't tell us apart, it makes no difference whether you ever see me again or not. You see, Mr.—but *did* you ever tell me what your name is? Well, I know it, anyhow, Mr. Donovan."

The little work-table was between us, and on it lay the foil which her father had snatched from the wall the night before. I still stood, gazing down at Rosalind. Fashion, I saw, had done something for the amazing resemblance. She wore her hair in the pompadour of the day, with exactly Helen's sweep; and her white gown was identical with that worn that year by thousands of young women. She had even the same gestures, the same little way of resting her cheek against her hand that Helen had; and before she spoke she moved her head a

trifle to one side, with a pretty suggestion of just having been startled from a reverie, that was Helen's trick precisely.

She forgot for a moment our serious affairs, to which I was not in the least anxious to turn, in her amusement at my perplexity.

"It must be even more extraordinary than I imagined. I have not seen Helen for seven years. She is my cousin; and when we were children together at Stamford our mothers used to dress us alike to further the resemblance. Our mothers, you may not know, were not only sisters; they were twin sisters! But Helen is, I think, a trifle taller than I am. This little mark"—she touched the peak—"is really very curious. Both our mothers and our grandmother had it. And you see that I speak a little more rapidly than she does—at least that used to be the case. I don't know my grown-up cousin at all. We probably have different tastes, temperaments, and all that."

"I am positive of it!" I exclaimed; yet I was really sure of nothing, save that I was talking to an exceedingly pretty girl, who was amazingly like another very pretty girl whom I knew much better.

"You are her guardian, so to speak, Mr. Donovan.

You are taking care of my Aunt Pat and my cousin. Just how that came about I don't know."

"They were sent to St. Agatha's by Father Stoddard, an old friend of mine. They had suffered many annoyances, to put it mildly, and came here to get away from their troubles."

"Yes; I understand. Uncle Henry has acted outrageously. I have not ranged the country at night for nothing. I have even learned a few things from you," she laughed. "And you must continue to serve Aunt Patricia and my cousin. You see,"—and she smiled her grave smile—"my father and I are an antagonistic element."

"No; not as between you and Miss Patricia! I'm sure of that. It is Henry Holbrook that I am to protect her from. You and your father do not enter into it."

"If you don't mind telling me, Mr. Donovan, I should like to know whether Aunt Pat has mentioned us."

"Only once, when I first saw her and she explained why she had come. She seemed greatly moved when she spoke of your father. Since then she has never referred to him. But the day we cruised up to Battle Orchard and Henry Holbrook's man tried to smash our launch, she was shaken out of herself, and she declared war when

we got home. Then I was on the lake with her the night of the carnival. Helen did not go with us. And when you paddled by us, Miss Pat was quite disturbed at the sight of you; but she thought it was an illusion, and—I thought it was Helen!"

"I have been home only a few weeks, but I came just in time to be with father in his troubles. My uncle's enmity is very bitter, as you have seen. I do not understand it. Father has told me little of their difficulties; but I know," she said, lifting her head proudly, "I know that my father has done nothing dishonorable. He has told me so, and I am content with that."

I bowed, not knowing what to say.

"I have been here only once or twice before, and for short visits only. Most of the time I have been at a convent in Canada, where I was known as Rosalind Hartridge. Rosalind, you know, is really my name: I was named for Helen's mother. The Sisters took pity on my loneliness, and were very kind to me. But now I am never going to leave my father again."

She spoke with no unkindness or bitterness, but with a gravity born of deep feeling. I marked now the lighter *timbre* of her voice, that was quite different from her cousin's; and she spoke more rapidly, as she had said, her

naturally quick speech catching at times the cadence of cultivated French. And she was a simpler nature—I felt that; she was really very unlike Helen.

"You manage a canoe pretty well," I ventured, still studying her face, her voice, her ways, eagerly.

"That was very foolish, wasn't it?—my running in behind the procession that way!" and she laughed softly at the recollection. "But that was professional pride! That was one of my father's best canoes, and he helped me to decorate it. He takes a great delight in his work; it's all he has left! And I wanted to show those people at Port Annandale what a really fine canoe—a genuine Hartridge—was like. I did not expect to run into you or Aunt Pat."

"You should have gone on and claimed the prize. It was yours of right. When your star vanished I thought the world had come to an end."

"It hadn't, you see! I put out the lights so that I could get home unseen."

"You gave us a shock. Please don't do it again; and please, if you and your cousin are to meet, kindly let it be on solid ground. I'm a little afraid, even now, that you are a lady of dreams."

"Not a bit of it! I enjoy a sound appetite; I can

carry a canoe like a Canadian guide; I am as good a fencer as my father; and I'm not afraid of the dark. You see, in the long vacations up there in Canada I lived out of doors and I shouldn't mind staying on here always. I like to paddle a canoe, and I know how to cast a fly, and I've shot ducks from a blind. You see how very highly accomplished I am! Now, my cousin Helen—"

"Well—?" and I was glad to hear her happy laugh. Sorrow and loneliness had not stifled the spirit of mischief in her, and she enjoyed vexing me with references to her cousin.

I walked the length of the room and looked out upon the creek that ran singing through the little vale. They were a strange family, these Holbrooks, and the perplexities of their affairs multiplied. How to prevent further injury and heartache and disaster; how to restore this girl and her exiled father to the life from which they had vanished; and how to save Miss Pat and Helen,—these things possessed my mind and heart. I sat down and faced Rosalind across the table. She had taken up a bright bit of ribbon from the work-basket and was slipping it back and forth through her fingers.

"The name Gillespie was mentioned here last night.

Can you tell me just how he was concerned in your father's affairs?" I asked.

"He was the largest creditor of the Holbrook bank. He lived at Stamford, where we all used to live."

"This Gillespie had a son. I suppose he inherits his father's claims."

She laughed outright.

"I have heard of him. He is a remarkable character, it seems, who does ridiculous things. He did as a child: I remember him very well as a droll boy at Stamford, who was always in mischief. I had forgotten all about him until I saw an amusing account of him in a newspaper a few months ago. He had been arrested for fast driving in Central Park; and the next day he went back to the park with a boy's toy wagon and team of goats, as a joke on the policeman."

"I can well believe it! The fellow's here, staying at the inn at Annandale."

"So I understand. To be frank, I have seen him and talked with him. We have had, in fact, several interesting interviews,"—and she laughed merrily.

"Where did all this happen?"

"Once, out on the lake, when we were both prowling about in canoes. I talked to him, but made him keep his

distance. I dared him to race me, and finally paddled off and left him. Then another time, on the shore near St. Agatha's. I was taking an observation of the school garden from the bluff, and Mr. Gillespie came walking through the woods and made love to me. He came so suddenly that I couldn't run, but I saw that he took me for Helen, in broad daylight, and I—I—"

"Well, of course you scorned him—you told him to be gone. You did that much for her."

"No, I didn't. I liked his love-making; it was unaffected and simple."

"Oh, yes! It would naturally be simple!"

"That is brutal. He's clever, and earnest, and amusing. But—" and her brow contracted, "but if he is seeking my father—"

"Rest assured he is not. He is in love with your cousin—that's the reason for his being here."

"But that does not help my father's case any."

"We will see about that. You are right about him; he's really a most amusing person, and not a fool, except for his own amusement. He is shrewd enough to keep clear of Miss Pat, who dislikes him intensely on his father's account. She feels that the senior Gillespie was the cause of all her troubles, but I don't know just why.

She's strongly prejudiced against the young man, and his whimsicalities do not appeal to her."

"I suppose Helen cares nothing for him; he acted toward me as though he'd been crushed, and I—I tried to be nice to him to make up for it."

"That was nice of you, very nice of you, Rosalind. I hope you will keep right on the way you've begun. Now I must ask you not to leave here, and not to allow your father to leave unless I know it."

"But you have your hands full without us. Your first obligation is to Aunt Pat and Helen. My father and I have merely stumbled in where we were not invited. You and I had better say good-by now."

"I am not anxious to say good-by," I answered lamely, and she laughed at me.

Helen, I reflected, did not laugh so readily. Rosalind was beautiful, she was charming; and yet her likeness to Helen failed in baffling particulars. Even as she came through the daisy meadow there had been a difference—at least I seemed to realize it now. The white butterflies symbolized her Ariel-like quality; for the life of me I could not associate those pale, fluttering vagrants with Helen Holbrook.

"We met under the star-r-rs, Mr. Donovan" (this was

impudent; my own *r's* trill, they say), "at the stone seat and by the boat-house, and we talked Shakespeare and had a beautiful time,—all because you thought I was Helen. In your anxiety to be with her you couldn't see that I haven't quite her noble height,—I'm an inch shorter. I gave you every chance there at the boat-house, to see your mistake; but you wouldn't have it so. And you let me leave you there while I went back alone across the lake to Red Gate, right by Battle Orchard, which is haunted by Indian ghosts. You are a most gallant gentleman!"

"When you are quite done, Rosalind!"

"I don't know when I shall have a chance again, Mr. Donovan," she went on provokingly. "I learned a good deal from you in those interviews, but I did have to do a lot of guessing. That was a real inspiration of mine, to insist on playing that Helen by night and Helen by day were different personalities, and that you must not speak to the one of the other. That saved complications, because you did keep to the compact, didn't you?"

I assented, a little grudgingly; and my thoughts went back with reluctant step to those early affairs of mine, which I have already frankly disclosed in this chronicle, and I wondered, with her counterpart before me, how

much Helen really meant to me. Rosalind studied me with her frank, merry eyes; then she bent forward and addressed me with something of that prescient air with which my sisters used to lecture me.

"Mr. Donovan, I fear you are a little mixed in your mind this morning, and I propose to set you straight."

"About what, if you please?"

The conceit in man always rises and struts at the approach of a woman's sympathy. My body ached, the knife slash across my ribs burnt, and I felt myself a sadly abused person as Rosalind addressed me.

"I understand all about you, Mr. Donovan."

My plumage fell; I did not want to be understood, I told myself; but I said:

"Please go on."

"I can tell you exactly why it is that Helen has taken so strong hold of your imagination,—why, in fact, you are in love with her."

"Not that—not that."

She snatched the foil from the table and cut the air with it several times as I started toward her. Then she stamped her foot and saluted me.

"Stand where you are, sir! Your race, Mr. Donovan, has a bad reputation in matters of the heart. For a mo-

ment you thought you were in love with me; but you are not, and you are not going to be. You see, I understand you perfectly."

"That's what my sisters used to tell me."

"Precisely! And I'm another one of your sisters—you must have scores of them!—and I expect you to be increasingly proud of me."

"Of course I admire Helen—" I began, I fear, a little sheepishly.

"And you admire most what you don't understand about her! Now that you examine me in the light of day you see what a tremendous difference there is between us. I am altogether obvious; I am not the least bit subtle. But Helen puzzles and thwarts you. She finds keen delight in antagonizing you; and she as much as says to you, 'Mr. Donovan, you are a frightfully conceited person, and you have had many adventures by sea and shore, and you think you know all about human nature and women, but I—*I*—am quite as wise and resourceful as you are, and whether I am right or wrong I'm going to fight you, fight you, fight you!' There, Mr. Laurance Donovan, is the whole matter in a nut-shell, and I should like you to know that I am not at all deceived by you. You did me a great service last night,

and you would serve me again, I am confident of it; and I hope, when all these troubles are over, that we shall continue—my father, and you and I—the best friends in the world."

I can not deny that I was a good deal abashed by this declaration spoken without coquetry, and with a sincerity of tone and manner that seemed conclusive.

I began stammering some reply, but she recurred abruptly to the serious business that hung over us.

"I know you will do what you can for Aunt Pat. I wish you would tell her, if you think it wise, that father is here. They should understand each other. And Helen, my splendid, courageous, beautiful cousin,—you see I don't grudge her even her better looks, or that intrepid heart that makes us so different. I am sure you can manage all these things in the best possible way. And now I must find my father, and tell him that you are going to arrange a meeting with Aunt Pat, and talk to him of our future."

She led the way up to the garden, and as I struck off into the road she waved her hand to me, standing under the overhanging sign that proclaimed Hartridge, the canoe-maker, at Red Gate.

CHAPTER XIX

HELEN TAKES ME TO TASK

My Lady's name, when I hear strangers use,
Not meaning her, to me sounds lax misuse;
I love none but my Lady's name;
Maude, Grace, Rose, Marian, all the same,
Are harsh, or blank and tame.

* * * * * * * *

Fresh beauties, howsoe'er she moves, are stirr'd:
As the sunn'd bosom of a humming-bird
At each pant lifts some fiery hue,
Fierce gold, bewildering green or blue;
The same, yet ever new.

—*Thomas Woolner.*

I paced the breezy terrace at Glenarm, studying my problems, and stumbling into new perplexities at every turn. My judgment has usually served me poorly in my own affairs, which I have generally confided to Good Luck, that most amiable of goddesses; and I glanced out upon the lake with some notion, perhaps, of seeing her fairy sail drifting toward me. But there, to my vexation, hung the *Stiletto,* scarcely moving in the indolent air of noon. There was, I felt again, something sinister

in the very whiteness of its pocket-handkerchief of canvas as it stole lazily before the wind. Did Miss Pat, in the school beyond the wall, see and understand, or was the yacht hanging there as a menace or stimulus to Helen Holbrook, to keep her alert in her father's behalf?

"There are ladies to see you, sir," announced the maid, and I found Helen and Sister Margaret waiting in the library.

The Sister, as though by prearrangement, went to the farther end of the room and took up a book.

"I wish to see you alone," said Helen, "and I didn't want Aunt Pat to know I came," and she glanced toward Sister Margaret, whose brown habit and nun's bonnet had merged into the shadows of a remote alcove.

The brim of Helen's white-plumed hat made a little dusk about her eyes. Pink and white became her; she put aside her parasol and folded her ungloved hands, and then, as she spoke, her head went almost imperceptibly to one side, and I found myself bending forward as I studied the differences between her and the girl on the Tippecanoe. Helen's lips were fuller and ruddier, her eyes darker, her lashes longer. But there was another difference, too subtle for my powers of analysis; some-

thing less obvious than the length of lash or the color of eyes; and I was not yet ready to give a name to it. Of one thing I was sure: my pulses quickened before her; and her glance thrilled through me as Rosalind's had not.

"Mr. Donovan, I have come to appeal to you to put an end to this miserable affair into which we have brought you. My own position has grown too difficult, too equivocal to be borne any longer. You saw from my father's conduct last night how hopeless it is to try to reason with him. He has brooded upon his troubles until he is half mad. And I learned from him what I had not dreamed of, that my Uncle Arthur is here—here, of all places. I suppose you know that."

"Yes; but it is a mere coincidence. It was a good hiding-place for him, as well as for us."

"It is very unfortunate for all of us that he should be here. I had hoped he would bury himself where he would never be heard of again!" she said, and anger burned for a moment in her face. "If he has any shame left, I should think he would leave here at once!"

"It's to be remembered, Miss Holbrook, that he came first; and I am quite satisfied that your father sought him here before you and your aunt came to Annandale.

It seems to me the equity lies with your uncle—the creek as a hiding-place belongs to him by right of discovery."

She smiled ready agreement to this, and I felt that she had come to win support for some plan of her own. She had never been more amiable; certainly she had never been lovelier.

"You are quite right. We had all of us better go and leave him in peace. What is it he does there—runs a ferry or manages a boat-house?"

"He is a canoe-maker," I said dryly, "with more than a local reputation."

Her tone changed at once.

"I'm glad; I'm very glad he has escaped from his old ways; for all our sakes," she added, with a little sigh. "And poor Rosalind! You may not know that he has a daughter. She is about a year younger than I. She must have had a sad time of it. I was named for her mother and she for mine. If you should meet her, Mr. Donovan, I wish you would tell her how sorry I am not to be able to see her. But Aunt Pat must not know that Uncle Arthur is here. I think she has tried to forget him, and her troubles with my father have effaced everything else. I hope you will manage that, for me; that Aunt Pat shall not know that Uncle Arthur and Rosalind are here.

It could only distress her. It would be opening a book that she believes closed forever."

Her solicitude for her aunt's peace of mind, spoken with eyes averted and in a low tone, lacked nothing.

"I have seen your cousin," I said. "I saw her, in fact, this morning."

"Rosalind? Then you can tell me whether—whether I am really so like her as they used to think!"

"You *are* rather like!" I replied lightly. "But I shall not attempt to tell you how. It would not do—it would involve particulars that might prove embarrassing. There are times when even I find discretion better than frankness."

"You wish to save my feelings," she laughed. "But I am really taller!"

"By an inch—she told me that!"

"Then you have seen her more than once?"

"Yes; more than twice even."

"Then you must tell me wherein we are alike; I should really like to know."

"I have told you I can't; it's beyond my poor powers. I will tell you this, though—"

"Well?"

"That I think you both delightful."

"I am disappointed in you. I thought you a man of courage, Mr. Donovan."

"Even brave men falter at the cannon's mouth!"

"You are undoubtedly an Irishman, Mr. Donovan. I am sorry we shan't have any more tennis."

"You have said so, Miss Holbrook, not I."

She laughed, and then glanced toward the brown figure of Sister Margaret, and was silent for a moment, while the old clock on the stair boomed out the half-hour and was answered cheerily by the pretty tinkle of the chapel chime. I counted four poppy-leaves that fluttered free from a bowl on the book-shelf above her head and lazily fell to the floor at her feet.

"I had hoped," she said, "that we were good friends, Mr. Donovan."

"I have believed that we were, Miss Holbrook."

"You must see that this situation must terminate, that we are now at a crisis. You can understand—I need not tell you—how fully my sympathies lie with my father; it could not be otherwise."

"That is only natural. I have nothing to say on that point."

"And you can understand, too, that it has not been easy for me to be dependent upon Aunt Pat. You don't

know—I have no intention of talking against her—but you can't blame me for thinking her hard—a little hard on my father."

I nodded.

"I am sorry, very sorry, that you should have these troubles, Miss Holbrook."

"I know you are," she replied eagerly, and her eyes brightened. "Your sympathy has meant so much to Aunt Pat and me. And now, before worse things happen—"

"Worse things must not happen!"

"Then we must put an end to it all, Mr. Donovan. There is only one way. My father will never leave here until Aunt Pat has settled with him. And it is his right to demand it," she hurried on. "I would have you know that he is not as black as he has been painted. He has been his own worst enemy; and Uncle Arthur's ill-doings must not be charged to him. But he has been wrong, terribly wrong, in his conduct toward Aunt Pat. I do not deny that, and he does not. But it is only a matter of money, and Aunt Pat has plenty of it; and there can be no question of honor between Uncle Arthur and father. It was Uncle Arthur's act that caused all this trouble; father has told me the whole story. Quite

likely father would make no good use of his money—I will grant that. But think of the strain of these years on all of us; think of what it has meant to me, to have this cloud hanging over my life! It is dreadful—beyond any words it is hideous; and I can't stand it any longer, not another week—not another day! It must end now and here."

Her tear-filled eyes rested upon me pleadingly, and a sob caught her throat as she tried to go on.

"But—" I began.

"Please—please!" she broke in, touching her handkerchief to her eyes and smiling appealingly. "I am asking very little of you, after all."

"Yes, it is little enough; but it seems to me a futile interference. If your father would go to her himself, if you would take him to her—that strikes me as the better strategy of the matter."

"Then am I to understand that you will not help; that you will not do this for us—for me?"

"I am sorry to have to say no, Miss Holbrook," I replied steadily.

"Then I regret that I shall have to go further; I must appeal to you as a personal matter purely. It is not easy; but if we are really very good friends—"

She glanced toward Sister Margaret, then rose and walked out upon the terrace.

"You will hate me—" she began, smiling wanly, the tears bright in her eyes; and she knew that it was not easy to hate her. "I have taken money from Mr. Gillespie, for my father, since I came here. It is a large sum, and when my father left here he went away to spend it—to waste it. It is all gone, and worse than gone. I must pay that back—I must not be under obligations to Mr. Gillespie. It was wrong, it was very wrong of me, but I was distracted, half crazed by my father's threats of violence against Aunt Pat—against us all. I am sure that you can see how I came to do it. And now you are my friend; will you help me?" and she broke off, smiling, tearful, her back to the balustrade, her hand at her side lightly touching it.

She had confidence, I thought, in the power of tears, as she slipped her handkerchief into her sleeve and waited for me to answer.

"Of course Mr. Gillespie only loaned you the money to help you over a difficulty; in some way that must be cared for. I like him; he is a fellow of good impulses. I repeat that I believe this matter can be arranged readily enough, by yourself and your father. My intrusion would only

make a worse muddle of your affairs. Send for your father and let him go to your aunt in the right spirit; and I believe that an hour's talk will settle everything."

"You seem to have misunderstood my purpose in coming here, Mr. Donovan," she answered coldly. "I asked your help, not your advice. I have even thrown myself on your mercy, and you tell me to do what you know is impossible."

"Nothing is so impossible as the present attitude of your father. Until that is changed your aunt would be doing your father a great injury by giving him this money."

"And as for me—" and her eyes blazed—"as for me," she said, choking with anger, "after I have opened this page of my life to you and you have given me your fatherly advice—as for me, I will show you, and Aunt Pat and all of them, that what can not be done one way may be done in another. If I say the word and let the law take its course with my uncle—that man who brought all these troubles upon us—you may have the joy of knowing that it was your fault—your fault, Mr. Donovan!"

"I beg of you, do nothing! If you will not bring your father to Miss Pat, please let me arrange the meeting."

"He will not listen to you. He looks upon you as a meddler; and so do I, Mr. Donovan!"

"But your uncle—you must not, you would not!" I cried, terror-struck to see how fate drew her toward the pitfall from which I hoped to save her.

"Don't say 'must not' to me, if you please!" she flung back; but when she reached the door she turned and said calmly, though her eyes still blazed:

"I suppose it is not necessary for me to ask that you consider what I have said to you confidential."

"It is quite unnecessary," I said, not knowing whether I loved or pitied her most; and my wits were busy trying to devise means of saving her the heartache her ignorance held in store for her.

She called to Sister Margaret in her brightest tone, and when I had walked with them to St. Agatha's gate she bade me good-by with quite as demure and Christian an air as the Sister herself.

CHAPTER XX

THE TOUCH OF DISHONOR

Give me a staff of honour for mine age.
—Titus Andronicus.

I was meditating my course over a cheerless luncheon when Gillespie was announced. He lounged into the dining-room, drew his chair to the table and covered a biscuit with camembert with his usual inscrutable air.

"I think it is better," he said deliberatingly, "to be an ass than a fool. Have you any views on the subject?"

"None, my dear Buttons. I have been called both by shrewd men."

"So have I, if the worst were known, and they offered proof! Ah, more and more I see that we were born for each other, Donovan. I was once so impressed with the notion that to be a fool was to be distinguished that I conceived the idea of forming a Noble Order of Serene and Incurable Fools. I elected myself The Grand and Most Worthy Master, feeling safe from competition. News of the matter having gone forth, many persons of

the highest standing wrote to me, recommending their friends for membership. My correspondence soon engaged three type-writers, and I was obliged to get the post-office department to help me break the chain. A few humble souls applied on their own hook for consideration. These I elected and placed in the first class. You would be surprised to know how many people who are chronic joiners wrote in absent-mindedly for application blanks, fearing to be left out of a good thing. United States senators were rather common on the list, and there were three governors; a bishop wrote to propose a brother bishop, of whose merits he spoke in the warmest terms. Many newspapers declared that the society filled a long-felt want. I received invitations to speak on the uses and benefits of the order from many learned bodies. The thing began to bore me, and when my official stationery was exhausted I issued a farewell address to my troops and dissolved the society. But it's a great gratification to me, my dear Donovan, that we quit with a waiting-list."

"There are times, Buttons, when you cease to divert me. I'm likely to be very busy for a few days. Just what can I do for you this afternoon?"

"Look here, old man, you're not angry?"

"No; I'm rarely angry; but I'm often bored."

"Then your brutal insinuation shall not go unrewarded. Let me proceed. But first, how are your ribs?"

"Sore and a trifle stiff, but I'm comfortable, thanks."

"As I understand matters, Irishman, there is no real difference between you and me except in the matter of a certain lady. Otherwise we might combine our forces in the interest of these unhappy Holbrooks."

"You are quite right. You came here to say something; go on and be done with it."

He deftly covered another biscuit with the cheese, of whose antiquity he complained sadly.

"I say, Donovan, between old soldier friends, what were you doing up there on the creek last night?"

"Studying the landscape effects by starlight. It's a habit of mine. Your own presence there might need accounting for, if you don't mind."

"I will be square about it. I met Helen quite accidentally as I left this house, and she wanted to see her father. I took her over there, and we found Henry. He was up to some mischief—you may know what it was. Something had gone wrong with him, and he was in all kinds of a bad humor. Unfortunately, you got the benefit of some of it."

"I will supply you a link in the night's affairs. Henry had been to see his brother Arthur."

Gillespie's face fell, and I saw that he was greatly surprised.

"Humph! Helen didn't tell me that."

"The reason Henry came here was to look for his brother. That's how he reached this place ahead of Miss Pat and Helen. And I have learned something—it makes no difference how, but it was not from the ladies at St. Agatha's—I learned last night that the key of this whole situation is in your own hands, Gillespie. Your father was swindled by the Holbrooks; which Holbrook?"

He was at once sane and serious, and replied soberly:

"I never doubted that it was Arthur. If he wasn't guilty, why did he run away? It was a queer business, and father never mentioned it. Henry gave out the impression that my father had taken advantage of Holbrook Brothers and forced their failure; but father shut up and never told me anything."

"But you have the notes—"

"Yes, but I'm not to open them, yet. I can't tell you about that now." He grew red and played with his cravat.

"Where are they?" I asked.

"I've just had them sent to me; they're in the bank at Annandale. There's another thing you may not know. Old man Holbrook, who lived to be older than the hills, left a provision in his will that adds to the complications. Miss Pat may have mentioned that stuff in her father's will about the honor of the brothers—?"

"She just mentioned it. Please tell me what you know of it."

He took out his pocket-book and read me this paragraph from a newspaper cutting:

"And the said one million dollars hereinbefore specifically provided for shall, after the lapse of ten years, be divided between my said sons Henry and Arthur Holbrook, share and share alike; but if either of my said sons shall have been touched by dishonor through his own act, as honor is accounted, reckoned and valued among men, my said daughter Patricia to be the sole judge thereof, then he shall forfeit his share of said amount thus withheld, and the whole of said sum of one million dollars shall be adjudged to belong to the other son."

Gillespie lighted a cigarette and smoked quietly for several minutes, and when he spoke it was with deep feeling.

"I love that girl, Donovan. I believe she cares for me, or would if she could get out of all these entanglements.

I'm almost ready to burn that packet and tell Miss Pat she's got to settle with Henry and be done with it. Let him spend his money and die in disgrace and go to the devil; anything is better than all this secrecy and mystery that enmeshes Helen. I'm going to end it; I'm going to end it!"

We had gone to the library, and he threw himself down in the chair from which she had spoken of him so short a time before that I seemed still to feel her presence in the room.

He was of that youthful, blond type which still sunburns after much tanning. His short hair was brushed smooth on his well-formed head. The checks and stripes and hideous color combinations in his raiment, which Miss Pat had mentioned at our first interview, were, I imagined, peculiar to his strange humor—a denotement of his willingness to sacrifice himself to mystify or annoy others. He seemed younger to-day than I had thought him before; he was a kind, generous, amusing boy, whose physical strength seemed an anomaly in one so gentle. He did not understand Helen; and as I reflected that I was not sure I understood her myself, the heads of the dragon multiplied, and my task at Annandale grew on my hands. But I wanted to help

this boy if it was in me to do it, and I clapped him on the shoulder.

"Cheer up, lad! If we can't untie the knot we'll lose no time cutting the string. There may be some fun in this business before we get through with it."

I began telling him of some of my own experiences, and won him to a cheerier mood. When we came round to the Holbrooks again his depression had passed, and we were on the best of terms.

"But there's one thing we can't get away from, Donovan. I've got to protect Helen; don't you see? I've got to take care of her, whatever comes."

"But you can't take care of her father. He's hopeless."

"I could give him this money myself, couldn't I? I can do it, and I've about concluded that I ought to do it."

"But that would be a waste. It would be like giving whisky to a drunkard. Money has been at the bottom of all this trouble."

Gillespie threw up his hands with a gesture of helplessness.

"I shall undoubtedly lose such wits as I have if we don't get somewhere in this business pretty soon. But,

Donovan, there's something I want to ask you. I don't like to speak of it, but when we were coming away from that infernal island, after our scrap with the dago, there were two people walking on the bluff—a man and a woman, and the woman was nearest us. She seemed to be purposely putting herself in the man's way so we couldn't see him. It didn't seem possible that Helen could be there—but?"

He clearly wished to be assured, and I answered at once:

"I saw them; it couldn't have been Helen. It was merely a similarity of figure. I couldn't distinguish her face at all. Very likely they were Port Annandale cottagers."

"I thought so myself," he replied, evidently relieved. It did not seem necessary to tell him of Rosalind at Red Gate; that was my secret, and I was not yet ready to share it.

"I've got to talk to somebody, and I want to tell you something, Donovan. I can't deny that there are times when Helen doesn't seem—well, all that I have thought her at other times. Sometimes she seems selfish and hard, and all that. And I know she hasn't treated Miss Pat right; it isn't square for her to take Miss Pat's

bounty and then work against her. But I make allowances, Donovan."

"Of course," I acquiesced, wishing to cheer him. "So do I. She has been hard put in this business. And a man's love can't always be at par—or a woman's either! The only thing a man ought to exact of the woman he marries is that she put up a cheerful breakfast-table. Nothing else counts very much. Start the day right, hand him his gloves and a kind word at the front door as he sallies forth to the day's battle, and constancy and devotion will be her reward. I have spoken words of wisdom. Harken, O Chief Button-maker of the World!"

The chiming of the bells beyond the Glenarm wall caused him to lift his head defiantly. I knew what was in his mind. He was in love—or thought he was, which has been said to be the same thing—and he wanted to see the girl he loved; and I resolved to aid him in the matter. I have done some mischief in my life, but real evil I have, I hope, never done. It occurred to me now that I might do a little good. And for justification I reasoned that I was already so deep in the affairs of other people that a little further plunge could do no particular harm.

"You think her rarely beautiful, don't you, Buttons?"

"She is the most beautiful woman in the world!" he exclaimed.

"The type is not without charm. Every man has his ideal in the way of a type. I will admit that her type is rare," I remarked with condescension.

"Rare!" he shouted. "Rare! You speak of her, Irishman, as though she were a mummy or a gargoyle or—or—"

"No; I should hardly say that. But there are always others."

"There are no others—not another one to compare with her! You are positively brutal when you speak of that girl. You should at least be just to her; a blind man could feel her beauty even if he couldn't see!"

"I repeat that it's the type! Propinquity, another pair of dark eyes, the drooping lash, those slim fingers resting meditatively against a similar oval olive cheek, and the mischief's done."

"I don't understand you," he declared blankly, and then the color flooded his face. "I believe you are in love with her yourself!" And then, ironically: "Or maybe it's just the type you fancy. Any other girl, with the same dark eyes, the drooping lash—"

"You'd never be happy with Helen Holbrook if she

married you, Gillespie. What you need is a clinging vine. Helen isn't that."

"That is your opinion, is it, Mr. Donovan? You want me to seek my faith in the arboretum, do you? You mustn't think yourself the permanent manager of all the Holbrooks and of me, too! I have never understood just how you broke into this. And I can't see that you have done much to help anybody, if you must know my opinion."

"I have every intention of helping you, Buttons. I like you. You have to me all the marks of a good fellow. My heart goes out to you in this matter. I want to see you happily married to a woman who will appreciate you. If you're not careful some girl will marry you for your money."

Good humor mastered him again, and he grinned his delightful boyish grin.

"I can't for the life of me imagine a girl's marrying me for anything else," he said. "Can you?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do for you, my lad," I said. "I'll arrange for you to see Helen to-night! You shall meet and talk and dance with her at Port Annandale casino, in the most conventional way in the world, with me for chaperon. By reason of being Mr. Glenarm's

guest here, I'm *ex officio* a member of the club. I'll manage everything. Miss Pat shall know nothing—all on one condition only."

"Well, name your price."

"That you shall not mention family affairs to her at all."

"God knows I shall be delighted to escape them!" His eyes brightened and he clapped his hands together. "I owe her a pair of gloves on an old wager. I have them in the village and will bring them over to-night," he said; but deception was not an easy game for him. I grinned and he colored.

"It's not money, Donovan," he said, as hurt as a misjudged child. "I won't lie to you. I was to meet her at St. Agatha's pier to-night to give her the gloves."

"You shall have your opportunity, but those meetings on piers won't do. I will hand her over to you at the casino at nine o'clock. I suppose I may have a dance or two?"

"I suppose so," he said, so grudgingly that I laughed aloud.

"Remember the compact; try to have a good time and don't talk of trouble," I enjoined, as we parted.

CHAPTER XXI

A BLUE CLOAK AND A SCARLET

When first we met we did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master;
Of more than common friendliness
When first we met we did not guess—
Who could foretell this sore distress—
This irretrievable disaster
When first we met? We did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master.
—*Robert Bridges.*

Miss Pat asked me to dine at St. Agatha's that night. The message came unexpectedly—a line on one of those quaint visiting-cards of hers, brought by the gardener; and when I had penned my acceptance I at once sent the following message by Ijima to the boat-maker's house at Red Gate:

To Rosalind at Red Gate:

It is important for you to appear with me at the Port Annandale casino to-night, and to meet Reginald Gillespie there. He is pledged to refer in no way to family affairs. If he should attempt to, you need only remind him of his promise. He will imagine that you are some one else, so please be careful not to tax his imagination too far. There

is much at stake which I will explain later. You are to refuse nothing that he may offer you. I shall come into the creek with the launch and call for you at Red Gate.

THE IRISHMAN AT GLENARM.

The casino dances are very informal. A plain white gown and a few ribbons. But don't omit your emerald.

I was not sure where this project would lead me, but I committed myself to it with a fair conscience. I reached St. Agatha's just as dinner was announced and we went out at once to the small dining-room used by the Sister in charge during vacation, where I faced Miss Pat, with Helen on one hand and Sister Margaret on the other. They were all in good humor, even Sister Margaret proving less austere than usual, and it is not too much to say that we were a merry party. Helen led me with a particular intention to talk of Irish affairs, and avowed her own unbelief in the capacity of the Irish for self-government.

"Now, Helen!" admonished Miss Pat, as our debate waxed warm.

"Oh, do not spare me! I could not be shot to pieces in a better cause!"

"The trouble with you people," declared Helen with finality, "is that you have no staying qualities. The smashing of a few heads occasionally satisfies your

islanders, then down go the necks beneath the yoke. You are incapable of prolonged war. Now even the Cubans did better; you must admit that, Mr. Donovan!"

She met my eyes with a challenge. There was no question as to the animus of the discussion: she wished me to understand that there was war between us, and that with no great faith in my wit or powers of endurance she was setting herself confidently to the business of defeating my purposes. And I must confess that I liked it in her!

"If we had you for an advocate our flag would undoubtedly rule the seas, Miss Holbrook!"

"I dip my colors," she replied, "only to the long-enduring, not to the valiant alone!"

"A lady of high renown," I mused aloud, while Miss Pat poured the coffee, "a lady of your own name, was once more or less responsible for a little affair that lasted ten years about the walls of a six-gated city."

"I wasn't named for *her!* No sugar to-night, please, Aunt Pat!"

I stood with her presently by an open window of the parlor, looking out upon the night. Sister Margaret had vanished about her household duties; Miss Pat had taken up a book with the rather obvious intention of leaving

us to ourselves. I expected to start at eight for my rendezvous at Red Gate, and my ear was alert to the chiming of the chapel clock. The gardener had begun his evening rounds, and paused in the walk beneath us.

"Don't you think," asked Helen, "that the guard is rather ridiculous?"

"Yes, but it pleases my medieval instincts to imagine that you need defenders. In the absence of a moat the gardener combines in himself all the apparatus of defense. Ijima is his Asiatic ally."

"And you, I suppose, are the grand strategist and field marshal."

"At least that!"

"After this morning I never expected to ask a favor of you; but if, in my humblest tone—"

"Certainly. Anything within reason."

"I want you to take me to the casino to-night to the dance. I'm tired of being cooped up here. I want to hear music and see new faces."

"Do pardon me for not having thought of it before! They dance over there every Wednesday and Saturday night. I'm sorry that to-night I have an engagement, but won't you allow me on Saturday?"

She was resting her arms on the high sill, gazing

out upon the lake. I stood near, watching her, and as she sighed deeply my heart ached for her; but in a moment she turned her head swiftly with mischief laughing in her eyes.

"You have really refused! You have positively declined! You plead another engagement! This is a place where one's engagements *are* burdensome."

"This one happens to be important."

She turned round with her back to the window.

"We are eternal foes; we are fighting it out to a finish; and it is better that way. But, Mr. Donovan, I haven't played all my cards yet."

"I look upon you as a resourceful person and I shall be prepared for the worst. Shall we say Saturday night for the dance?"

"No!" she exclaimed, tossing her head. "And let me have the satisfaction of telling you that I could not have gone with you to-night anyhow. Good-by."

I found Ijima ready with the launch at Glenarm pier, and, after a swift flight to the Tippecanoe, knocked at the door of Red Gate. Arthur Holbrook admitted me, and led the way to the room where, as his captive, I had first talked with him.

"We have met before," he said, smiling. "I thought

you were an enemy at that time. Now I believe I may count you a friend."

"Yes; I should like to prove myself your friend, Mr. Holbrook."

"Thank you," he said simply; and we shook hands. "You have taken an interest in my affairs, so my daughter tells me. She is very dear to me—she is all I have left; you can understand that I wish to avoid involving her in these family difficulties."

"I would cut off my right hand before I would risk injuring you or her, Mr. Holbrook," I replied earnestly. "You have a right to know why I wish her to visit the casino with me to-night. I know what she does not know, what only two other people know; I know why you are here."

"I am very sorry; I regret it very much," he said without surprise but with deep feeling. The jauntiness with which he carried off our first interview was gone; he seemed older, and there was no mistaking the trouble and anxiety in his eyes. He would have said more, but I interrupted him.

"As far as I am concerned no one else shall ever know. The persons who know the truth about you are your brother and yourself. Strangely enough, Reginald Gilles-

pie does not know. Your sister has not the slightest idea of it. Your daughter, I assume, has no notion of it—"

"No! no!" he exclaimed eagerly. "She has not known; she has believed what I have told her; and now she must never know how stupid, how mad, I have been."

"To-night," I said, "your daughter and I will gain possession of the forged notes. Gillespie will give them to her; and I should like to hold them for a day or two."

He was pacing the floor and at this wheeled upon me with doubt and suspicion clearly written on his face.

"But I don't see how you can manage it!"

"Mr. Gillespie is infatuated with your niece."

"With Helen, who is with my sister at St. Agatha's."

"I have promised Gillespie that he shall see her to-night at the casino dance. Your sister is very bitter against him and he is mortally afraid of her."

"His father really acted very decently, when you know the truth. But I don't see how this is to be managed. I should like to possess myself of those papers, but not at too great a cost. More for Rosalind's sake than my own now, I should have them."

"You may not know that your daughter and her cousin are as like as two human beings can be. I am rather put to it myself to tell them apart."

"Their mothers were much alike, but they were distinguishable. If you are proposing a substitution of Rosalind for Helen, I should say to have a care of it. You may deceive a casual acquaintance, but hardly a lover."

"I have carried through worse adventures. Those documents must not get into—into—unfriendly hands! I have pledged myself that Miss Patricia shall be kept free from further trouble, and much trouble lies in those forged notes if your brother gets them. But I hope to do a little more than protect your sister; I want to get you all out of your difficulties. There is no reason for your remaining in exile. You owe it to your daughter to go back to civilization. And your sister needs you. You saved your brother once; you will pardon me for saying that you owe him no further mercy."

He thrust his hands into his pockets and paced the floor a moment, before he said:

"You are quite right. But I am sure you will be very careful of my little girl; she is all I have—quite all I have."

He went to the hall and called her and bowed with a graceful, old-fashioned courtesy that reminded me of Miss Pat as Rosalind came into the room.

"Will I do, gentlemen all?" she asked gaily. "Do I look the fraud I feel?"

She threw off a long scarlet cloak that fell to her heels and stood before us in white—it was as though she had stepped out of flame. She turned slowly round, with head bent, submitting herself for our inspection.

Her gown was perfectly simple, high at the throat and with sleeves that clasped her wrists. To my masculine eyes it was of the same piece and pattern as the gown in which I had left Helen at St. Agatha's an hour before.

"I think I read doubt in your mind," she laughed. "You must not tell me now that you have backed out; I shall try it myself, if you are weakening. I am anxious for the curtain to rise."

"There is only one thing: I suggest that you omit that locket. I dined with her to-night, so my memory is fresh."

She unclasped the tiny locket that hung from a slight band of velvet at her throat, and threw it aside; and her father, who was not, I saw, wholly reconciled to my undertaking, held the cloak for her and led the way with a lantern through the garden and down to the waterside and along the creek to the launch where Ijima was in

readiness We quickly embarked, and the launch stole away through the narrow shores, Holbrook swinging his lantern back and forth in good-by. I had lingered longer at the boat-maker's than I intended, and as we neared the upper lake and the creek broadened Ijima sent the launch forward at full speed. When we approached Battle Orchard I bade him stop, and hiding our lantern I took an oar and guided the launch quietly by. Then we went on into the upper lake at a lively clip. Rosalind sat quietly in the bow, the hood of her cloak gathered about her head.

I was taking steering directions from Ijima, but as we neared Port Annandale I glanced over my shoulder to mark the casino pier lights when Rosalind sang out:

"Hard aport—hard!"

I obeyed, and we passed within oar's length of a sailboat, which, showing no light, but with mainsail set, was loafing leisurely before the light west wind. As we veered away I saw a man's figure at the wheel; another figure showed darkly against the cuddy.

"Hang out your lights!" I shouted angrily. But there was no reply.

"The *Stiletto*," muttered Ijima, starting the engine again.

"We must look out for her going back," I said, as we watched the sloop merge into shadow.

The lights of the casino blazed cheerily as we drew up to the pier, and Rosalind stepped out in good spirits, catching up and humming the waltz that rang down upon us from the club-house.

"Lady," I said, "let us see what lands we shall discover."

"I ought to feel terribly wicked, but I really never felt cheerfuller in my life," she averred. "But I have one embarrassment!"

"Well?"—and we paused, while she dropped the hood upon her shoulders.

"What shall I call this gentleman?"

"What does *she* call him? I'm blest if I know! I call him Buttons usually; Knight of the Rueful Countenance might serve; but very likely she calls him Reggie."

"I will try them all," she said. "I think we used to call him Reggie on Strawberry Hill. Very likely he will detect the fraud at once and I shan't get very far with him."

"You shall get as far as you please. Leave it to me. He shall see you first on the veranda overlooking the water where there are shadows in plenty, and you had

better keep your cloak about you until the first shock of meeting has passed. Then if he wants you to dance, I will hold the cloak, like a faithful chaperon, and you may muffle yourself in it the instant you come out; so even if he has his suspicions he will have no time to indulge them. He is undoubtedly patrolling the veranda, looking for us even now. He's a faithful knight!"

As we passed the open door the dance ceased and a throng of young people came gaily out to take the air. We joined the procession, and were accepted without remark. Several men whom I had seen in the village or met in the highway nodded amiably. Gillespie, I knew, was waiting somewhere; and I gave Rosalind final admonitions.

"Now be cheerful! Be cordial! In case of doubt grow moody, and look out upon the water, as though seeking an answer in the stars. Though I seem to disappear I shall be hanging about with an eye for danger-signals. Ah! He approaches! He comes!"

Gillespie advanced eagerly, with happiness alight in his face.

"Helen!" he cried, taking her hand; and to me: "You are not so great a liar after all, Irishman."

"Oh, Mr. Donovan is the kindest person imaginable,"

she replied and turned her head daringly so that the light from a window fell full upon her, and he gazed at her with frank, boyish admiration. Then she drew her wrap about her shoulders and sat down on a bench with her face in shadow, and as I walked away her laughter followed me cheerily.

I was promptly seized by a young man, who feigned to have met me in some former incarnation, and introduced to a girl from Detroit whose name I shall never know in this world. I remember that she danced well, and that she asked me whether I knew people in Duluth, Fond du Lac, Paducah and a number of other towns which she recited like a geographical index. She formed, I think, a high opinion of my sense of humor, for I laughed at everything she said in my general joy of the situation. After our third dance I got her an ice and found another cavalier for her. I did not feel at all as contrite as I should have felt as I strolled round the veranda toward Rosalind and Gillespie. They were talking in low tones and did not heed me until I spoke to them.

"Oh, it's you, is it?"—and Gillespie looked up at me resentfully.

"I have been gone two years! It seems to me I am

doing pretty well, all things considered! What have you been talking about?"

> "'—'Bout Giunts, an' Griffuns, an' Elves,
> An' the Squidgicum-Squees 'at swallers therselves!'"

Rosalind quoted. "I hope you have been enjoying yourself."

"After a dull fashion, yes."

"I should like to tell her that! We saw you through the window. She struck us as very pretty, didn't she, Reggie?"

"I didn't notice her," Gillespie replied with so little interest that we both laughed.

"It's too bad," remarked Rosalind, "that Aunt Pat couldn't have come with us. It would have been a relief for her to get away from that dreary school-house."

"I might go and fetch her," I suggested.

"If you do," said Gillespie, grinning, "you will not find us here when you get back."

Rosalind sighed, as though at the remembrance of her aunt's forlorn exile; then the music broke out in a two-step.

"Come! We must have this dance!" she exclaimed, and Gillespie rose obediently. I followed, exchanging

chaff with Rosalind until we came to the door, where she threw off her cloak for the first time.

"Lord and Protector, will you do me the honor?"

It all happened in a moment. I tossed the cloak across my arm carelessly and she turned to Gillespie without looking at me. He hesitated—some word faltered on his lips. I think it must have been the quick transition of her appearance effected by the change from the rich color of the cloak to the white of her dress that startled him. She realized the danger of the moment, and put her arm on his arm.

"We mustn't miss a note of it! Good-by,"—and with a nod to me I next saw her far away amid the throng of dancers.

As I caught up the cloak under my arm something crackled under my fingers, and hurrying to a dark corner of the veranda I found the pocket and drew forth an envelope. My conscience, I confess, was agreeably quiescent. You may, if you wish, pronounce my conduct at several points of this narrative wholly indefensible; but I was engaged in a sincere effort to straighten out the Holbrook tangle, and Helen had openly challenged me. If I could carry this deception through successfully I believed that within a few hours I might bring Henry

Holbrook to terms. As for Gillespie he was far safer with Rosalind than with Helen. I thrust the envelope into my breast pocket and settled myself by the veranda rail, where I could look out upon the lake, and at the same time keep an eye on the ball-room. And, to be frank about it, I felt rather pleased with myself! It would do Helen no great harm to wait for Gillespie on St. Agatha's pier: the discipline of disappointment would be good for her. Vigorous hand-clapping demanded a repetition of the popular two-step of the hour, and I saw Rosalind and Gillespie swing into the dance as the music struck up again.

Somewhere beneath I heard the rumble and bang of a bowling-alley above the music. Then my eyes, roaming the lake, fell upon the casino pier below. Some one was coming toward me—a girl wrapped in a long cloak who had apparently just landed from a boat. She moved swiftly toward the casino. I saw her and lost her again as she passed in and out of the light of the pier lamps. A dozen times the shadows caught her away; a dozen times the pier lights flashed upon her; and at last I was aware that it was Helen Holbrook, walking swiftly, as though upon an urgent errand. I ran down the steps and met her luckily on a deserted stretch of board walk.

I was prepared for an angry outburst, but hardly for the sword-like glitter of her first words.

"This is infamous! It is outrageous! I did not believe that even you would be guilty of this!"

The two-step was swinging on to its conclusion, and I knew that the casino entrance was not the place for a scene with an angry girl.

"I am anything you like; but please come to a place where we can talk quietly."

"I will not! I will not be tricked by you again."

"You will come along with me, at once and quietly," I said; and to my surprise she walked up the steps beside me. As we passed the ball-room door the music climbed to its climax and ended.

"Come, let us go to the farther end of the veranda."

When we had reached a quiet corner she broke out upon me again.

"If you have done what I think you have done, what I might have known you would do, I shall punish you terribly—you and her!"

"You may punish me all you like, but you shall not punish her!" I said with her own emphasis.

"Reginald promised me some papers to-night—my father had asked me to get them for him. She does not

know, this cousin of mine, what they are, what her father is! It is left for you to bring the shame upon her."

"It had better be I than you, in your present frame of mind!"—and the pity welled in my heart. I must save her from the heartache that lay in the truth. If I failed in this I should fail indeed.

"Do you want her to know that her father is a forger —a felon? That is what you are telling her, if you trick Reginald into giving her those papers he was to give me for my father!"

"She hasn't those papers. I have them. They are in my pocket, quite safe from all of you. You are altogether too vindictive, you Holbrooks! I have no intention of trusting you with such high explosives."

"Reginald shall take them away from you. He is not a child to be played with—duped in this fashion."

"Reginald is a good fellow. He will always love me for this—"

"For cheating him? Don't you suppose he will resent it? Don't you think he knows me from every other girl in the world?"

"No, I do not. In fact I have proved that he doesn't. You see, Miss Holbrook, he gave her the documents in the case without a question."

"And she dutifully passed them on to you!"

"Nothing of the kind, my dear Miss Holbrook! I took them out of her cloak pocket."

"That is quite in keeping!"

"I'm not done yet! Pardon me, but I want you to exchange cloaks with me. You shall have Reginald in a moment, and we will make sure that he is deceived by letting him take you home. You are as like as two peas —in everything except temper, humor and such trifles; but your cloaks are quite different. Please!"

"I will not!"

"Please!"

"You are despicable, despicable!"

"I am really the best friend you have in the world. Again, will you kindly exchange cloaks with me? Yours is blue, isn't it? I think Reginald knows blue from red. Ah, thank you! Now, I want you to promise to say nothing as he takes you home about papers, your father, your uncle or your aunt. You will talk to him of times when you were children at Stamford, and things like that, in a dreamy reminiscential key. If he speaks of things that you don't exactly understand, refers to what he has said to your cousin here to-night, you need only fend him off; tell him the incident is closed. When I

bring him to you in ten minutes it will be with the understanding that he is to take you back to St. Agatha's at once. He has his launch at the casino pier; you needn't say anything to him when you land, only that you must get home quietly, so Miss Pat shan't know you have been out. Your exits and your entrances are your own affair. Now I hope you see the wisdom of obeying me, absolutely."

"I didn't know that I could hate you so much!" she said quietly. "But I shall not forget this. I shall let you see before I am a day older that you are not quite the master you think you are: suppose I tell him how you have played with him."

"Then before you are three hours older I shall precipitate a crisis that you will not like, Miss Holbrook. I advise you, as your best friend, to do what I ask."

She shrugged her shoulders, drew the scarlet cloak more closely about her, and I left her gazing off into the strip of wood that lay close upon the inland side of the club-house. I was by no means sure of her, but there was no time for further parley. I dropped the blue cloak on a chair in a corner and hurried round to the door of the ball-room, meeting Rosalind and Gillespie coming out flushed with their dance.

"The hour of enchantment is almost past. I must have one turn before the princess goes back to her castle!"—and Rosalind took my arm.

"Meet me at the landing in two minutes, Gillespie! As a special favor—as a particular kindness—I shall allow you to take the princess home!" And I hurried Rosalind away, regained the blue cloak, and flung it about her.

"Well," she said, drawing the hood over her head, "who am I, anyhow!"

"Don't ask me such questions! I'm afraid to say."

"I like your air of business. You are undoubtedly a man of action!"

"I thank you for the word. I'm breathing hard. I have seen ghosts and communed with dragons. She's here! your *alter ego* is on this very veranda more angry than it is well for a woman to be."

"Oh," she faltered, "she found out and followed?"

"She did; she undoubtedly did!"

As we paused under one of the veranda lamps she looked down at the cloak and laughed.

"So this is hers! I thought it didn't feel quite right. But that pair of gloves!"

"It's in my pocket. I have stolen it!" I led the way

to the lower veranda of the casino, which was now deserted. "Stay right here and appear deeply interested in the heavens above and the waters under the earth until I get back."

I ran up the stairs again and found Helen where I had left her.

"And now," I said, giving her my arm, "you will not forget the rules of the game! Your fortunes, and your father's are brighter to-night than they have ever been. You hate me to the point of desperation, but remember I am your friend after all."

She stopped abruptly, hesitating. I felt indecision in the lessening touch upon my arm, and I saw it in her eyes as the light from the ball-room door flooded us.

"You have taken everything away from me! You are playing Reginald against me."

"Possibly—who knows! I supposed you had more faith in your powers than that!"

"I have no faith in anything," she said dejectedly.

"Oh, yes, you have! You have an immense amount of faith in yourself. And you know you care nothing at all about Reginald Gillespie; he's a nice boy, but that's all."

"You are contemptible and wicked!" she flared. "Let us go."

Gillespie's launch was ready when we reached the pier, and after he had handed her into it he plucked my sleeve, and held me for an instant.

"Don't you see how wrong you are! She is superb! She is not only the most beautiful girl in the world, but the dearest, the sweetest, the kindest and best. You have served me better than you know, old man, and I'm grateful!"

In a moment they were well under way and I ran back to the club-house and found Rosalind where I had left her.

"We must go at once," she said. "Father will be very anxious to know how it all came out."

"But what did you think of Buttons?"

"He's very nice," she said.

"Is that all? It doesn't seem conclusive, some way!"

"Oh, he's very kind and gentle, and anxious to please. But I felt like a criminal all the time."

"You seemed to be a very cheerful criminal. I suppose it was only the excitement that kept you going."

"Of course that was it! I was wondering what to call it. I'm afraid the Sisters at the convent would have a less pleasant word for it."

"Well, you are not in school now; and I think we have

done a good night's work for everybody concerned. But tell me, did he make love acceptably?"

"I suppose that was what he was doing, sir," she replied demurely, averting her head.

"Suppose?" I laughed.

"Yes; you see, it was my first experience. And he is really very nice, and so honest and kind and gentle that I felt sorry for him."

"Ah! You were sorry for him! Then it's all over. I'm clear out of it. When a woman is sorry for a man—tchk! But tell me, how did his advances compare with mine on those occasions when we met over there by St. Agatha's? I did my best to be entertaining."

"Oh, he is much more earnest than you ever could be. I never had any illusions about you, Mr. Donovan. You just amuse yourself with the nearest girl, and, besides, for a long time you thought I was Helen. Mr. Gillespie is terribly in earnest. When he was talking to me back there in the corner I didn't remember at all that it was he who drove a goat-team in Central Park to rebuke the policeman!"

"No; I suppose with the stage properly set,—with the music and the stars and the water,—one might forget Mr. Gillespie's mild idiosyncrasies."

"But you haven't told me about Helen. Of course she saw through the trick at once."

"She did;" I answered, in a tone that caused Rosalind to laugh.

"Well, you wouldn't hurt poor little me if she scolded you!"

We were on the pier, and I whistled to Ijima to bring up the launch. In a moment we were skimming over the lake toward the Tippecanoe.

Arthur Holbrook was waiting for us in the creek.

"It is all right," I said. "I shall keep the papers for the present, if you don't mind, but your troubles are nearly over." And I left Rosalind laughingly explaining to her father how it came about that she had gone to the casino in a scarlet cloak but had returned in a blue one.

CHAPTER XXII

MR. GILLESPIE'S DIVERSIONS

Patience or Prudence,—what you will,
Some prefix faintly fragrant still
As those old musky scents that fill
  Our grandmas' pillows;
And for her youthful portrait take
Some long-waist child of Hudson's make,
Stiffly at ease beside a lake
  With swans and willows.

—*Austin Dobson.*

In my own room I drew the blinds for greater security, lighted the desk-lamp and sat down before the packet Gillespie had given Rosalind. It was a brown commercial envelope, thrice sealed, and addressed, "R. Gillespie: Personal." In a corner was written "Holbrook Papers." I turned the packet over and over in my hands, reflecting upon my responsibility and duty in regard to it. Henry Holbrook, in his anxiety to secure the notes, had taken advantage of Gillespie's infatuation for Helen to make her his agent for procuring them, and now it was for me to use the forged notes as a

means of restoring Arthur Holbrook to his sister's confidence. The way seemed clear enough, and I went to bed resolving that in the morning I should go to Henry Holbrook, tell him that I had the evidence of his guilt in my possession and threaten him with exposure if he did not cease his mad efforts to blackmail his sister.

I rose early and perfected my plans for the day as I breakfasted. A storm had passed round us in the night and it was bright and cool, with a sharp wind beating the lake into tiny whitecaps. It was not yet eight o'clock when I left the house for my journey in search of Henry Holbrook. The envelope containing the forged notes was safely locked in the vault in which the Glenarm silver was stored. As I stepped down into the park I caught sight of Miss Pat walking in the garden beyond the wall, and as I lifted my cap she came toward the iron gate. She was rarely abroad so early and I imagined that she had been waiting for me.

The chill of the air was unseasonable, and in her long coat her slight figure seemed smaller than ever. She smiled her grave smile, but there was, I thought, an unusual twinkle in her gentle eyes. She wore for the first time a lace cap that gave a new delicacy to her face.

"You are abroad early, my lord," she said, with the

delicious quaint mockery with which she sometimes flattered me. And she repeated the lines:

"Hast thou seen ghosts? Hast thou at midnight heard
In the wind's talking an articulate word?
Or art thou in the secret of the sea,
And have the twilight woods confessed to thee?"

"No such pleasant things have happened to me, Miss Holbrook."

"This is my birthday. I have crowned myself: observe the cap!"

"We must celebrate! I crave the privilege of dining you to-night."

"You were starting for somewhere with an air of determination. Don't let me interfere with your plans."

"I was going to the boat-house," I answered truthfully.

"Let me come along. I am turned sixty-five, and I think I am entitled to do as I please; don't you?"

"I do, indeed, but that is no reason. You are no more sixty-five than I am. The cap, if you will pardon me, only proclaims your immunity from the blasts of Time."

"I wish I had known you at twenty," she said brightly, as we went on together.

"My subjection could not have been more complete."

"Do you make speeches like that to Helen?"

"If I do it is with less inspiration!"

"You must stop chaffing me. I am not sixty-five for nothing and I don't think you are naturally disrespectful."

When we reached the boat-house she took a chair on the little veranda and smiled as though something greatly amused her.

"Mr. Donovan—I am sixty-five, as I have said before—may I call you—"

"Larry! and gladden me forever!"

"Then, Larry, what a lot of frauds we all are!"

"I suppose we are," I admitted doubtfully, not sure where the joke lay.

"You have been trying to be very kind to me, haven't you?"

"I have accomplished nothing."

"You have tried to make my way easy here; and you have had no end of trouble. I am not as dull as I look, Larry."

"If I have deceived you it has been with an honest purpose."

"I don't question that. But Helen has been giving

you a great deal of trouble, hasn't she? You don't quite make her out; isn't that true?"

"I understand her perfectly," I averred recklessly.

"You are a daring young man, Larry, to make that statement of any woman. Helen has not always dealt honestly with you—or me!"

"She is the noblest girl in the world; she is splendid beyond any words of mine. I don't understand what you mean, Miss Holbrook."

"Larry, you dear boy, I am no more blind or deaf than I am dumb! Helen has been seeing her father and Reginald Gillespie. She has run off at night, thinking I wouldn't know it. She is an extremely clever young woman, but when she has made a feint of retiring early, only to creep out and drop down from the dining-room balcony and dodge your guards, I have known it. She was away last night and came creeping in like a thief. It has amused me, Larry; it has furnished me real diversion. The only thing that puzzles me is that I don't quite see where you stand."

"I haven't always been sure myself, to be frank about it!"

"Why not tell me just how it is: whether Helen has been amusing herself with you, or you with Helen."

"Oh!" I laughed. "When you came here you told me she was the finest girl in the world, and I accepted your word for it. I have every confidence in your judgment, and you have known your niece for a long time."

"I have indeed."

"And I'm sure you wouldn't have deceived me!"

"But I did! I wanted to interest you in her. Something in your eye told me that you might do great things for her."

"Thank you!"

"But instead of that you have played into her hands. Why did you let her steal out at night to meet her father, when you knew that could only do her and me a grave injury? And you have aided her in seeing Gillespie, when I particularly warned you that he was most repugnant to me."

I laughed in spite of myself as I remembered the night's adventure; and Miss Pat stopped short in the path and faced me with the least glint of anger in her eyes.

"I really didn't think you capable of it! She will marry him for his money!"

"Take my word for it, she will do nothing of the kind."

"You are under her spell, and you don't know her! I think—sometimes—I think the girl has no soul!" she said at last.

The dear voice faltered, and the tears flashed into Miss Pat's eyes as she confronted me in the woodland path.

"Oh, no! It's not so bad as that!" I pleaded.

"I tell you she has no soul! You will find it out to your cost. She is made for nothing but mischief in this world!"

"I am your humble servant, Miss Holbrook."

"Then," she began doubtfully, and meeting my eyes with careful scrutiny, "I am going to ask you to do one thing more for me, that we may settle all this disagreeable affair. I am going to pay Henry his money; but before I do so I must find my brother Arthur, if he is still alive. That may have some difficulties."

She looked at me as though for approval; then went on.

"I have been thinking of all these matters carefully since I came here. Henry has forfeited his right to further inheritance by his contemptible, cowardly treatment of me; but I am willing to forgive all that he has done. He was greatly provoked; it would not be fair

for me to hold those things against him. As between him and Arthur; as between him and Arthur—"

Her gaze lay across the twinkling lake, and her voice was tremulous. She spoke softly as though to herself, and I caught phrases of the paragraph of her father's will that Gillespie had read to me: *"Dishonor as it is known, accounted and reckoned among men;"*—and she bowed her head on the veranda rail a moment; then she rose suddenly and smiled bravely through her tears.

"Why can't you find Arthur for me? Ah, if you could only find him there might be peace between us all; for I am very old, Larry. Age without peace is like life without hope. I can not believe that Arthur is dead. I must see him again. Larry, if he is alive find him and tell him to come to me."

"Yes," I said; "I know where he is!"

She started in amazement and coming close, her hands closed upon my arm eagerly.

"It can't be possible! You know where he is and you will bring him to me?"

She was pitifully eager and the tears were bright in her eyes.

"Be assured of it, Miss Holbrook. He is near by and well; but you must not trouble about him or about any-

thing. And now I am going to take you home. Come! There is much to do, and I must be off. But you will keep a good heart; you are near the end of your difficulties."

She was quite herself again when we reached St. Agatha's, but at the door she detained me a moment.

"I like you, Larry!" she said, taking my hand; and my own mother had not given me sweeter benediction. "I never intended that Helen should play with you. She may serve me as she likes, but I don't want her to singe your wings, Larry."

"I have been shot at in three languages, and half drowned in others, and rewards have been offered for me. Do you think I'm going down before a mere matter of *beaux yeux!* Think better of me than that!"

"But she is treacherous; she will deliver you to the Philistines without losing a heart-beat."

"She could, Miss Patricia, but she won't!"

"She has every intention of marrying Gillespie; he's the richest man she knows!"

"I swear to you that she shall not marry Gillespie!"

"She would do it to annoy me if for nothing else."

I took both her hands—they were like rose-leaves, those dear slightly tremulous hands!

"Now, Miss Pat—I'm going to call you Miss Pat because we're such old friends, and we're just contemporaries, anyhow—now, Miss Pat, Helen is not half so wicked as she thinks she is. Gillespie and I are on the best of terms. He's a thoroughly good fellow and not half the fool he looks. And he will never marry Helen!"

"I should like to know what's going to prevent her from marrying him!" she demanded as I stepped back and turned to go.

"Oh, I am, if you must know! I have every intention of marrying her myself!"

I ran away from the protest that was faltering upon her lips, and strode through the garden. I had just reached Glenarm gate on my way back to the boat-house when a woman's voice called softly and Sister Margaret hurried round a turn of the garden path.

"Mr. Donovan!"

There was anxiety in the voice, and more anxious still was Sister Margaret's face as she came toward me in her brown habit, her hands clasped tensely before her. She had evidently been watching for me, and drew back from the gate into a quiet recess of the garden. Her usual repose was gone and her face, under its white coif, showed plainly her distress.

"I have bad news—Miss Helen has gone! I'm afraid something has happened to her."

"She can't have gone far, Sister Margaret. When did you miss her?" I asked quietly; but I confess that I was badly shaken. My confident talk about the girl with Miss Pat but a moment before echoed ironically in my memory.

"She did not come down for breakfast with her aunt or me, but I thought nothing of it, as I have urged both of them to breakfast up-stairs. Miss Patricia went out for a walk. An hour ago I tried Helen's door and found it unlocked and her room empty. When or how she left I don't know. She seems to have taken nothing with her."

"Can you tell a lie, Sister Margaret?"

She stared at me with so shocked an air that I laughed. "A lie in a good cause, I mean? Miss Pat must not know that her niece has gone—if she has gone! She has probably taken one of the canoes for a morning paddle; or, we will assume that she has borrowed one of the Glenarm horses, as she has every right to do, for a morning gallop, and that she has lost her way or gone farther than she intended. There are a thousand explanations!"

"But they hardly touch the fact that she was gone all

night; or that a strange man brought a note addressed in Helen's handwriting to her aunt only an hour ago."

"Kidnapped!"—and I laughed aloud as the meaning of her disappearance flashed upon me!

"I don't like your way of treating this matter!" said Sister Margaret icily. "The girl may die before she can be brought back."

"No, she won't—my word for it, Sister Margaret. Please give me the letter!"

"But it is not for you!"

"Oh, yes, it is! You wouldn't have Miss Pat subjected to the shock of a demand for ransom. Worse than that, Miss Pat has little enough faith in Helen as it is; and such a move as this would be final. This kidnapping is partly designed as a punishment for me, and I propose to take care of it without letting Miss Pat know. She shall never know!"

Sister Margaret, only half convinced, drew an envelope from her girdle and gave it to me doubtfully. I glanced at the superscription and then tore it across, repeating the process until it was a mass of tiny particles, which I poured into Sister Margaret's hands.

"Burn them! Now Miss Pat will undoubtedly ask for her niece at once. I suggest that you take care that she

is not distressed by Helen's absence. If it is necessary to reward your house-maid for her discretion—" I said with hesitation.

"Oh, I disarranged Helen's bed so that the maid wouldn't know!"—and Sister Margaret blushed.

"Splendid! I can teach you nothing, Sister Margaret! Please help me this much further: get one of Miss Helen's dresses—that blue one she plays tennis in, perhaps—and put it in a bag of some kind and give it to my Jap when he calls for it in ten minutes. Now listen to me carefully, Sister Margaret: I shall meet you here at twelve o'clock with a girl who shall be, to all intents and purposes, Helen Holbrook. In fact, she will be some one else. Now I expect you to carry off the situation through luncheon and until nightfall, when I expect to bring Helen—the real Helen—back here. Meanwhile, tell Miss Pat anything you like, quoting me! Good-by!"

I left her abruptly and was running toward Glenarm House to rouse Ijima, when I bumped into Gillespie, who had been told at the house that I was somewhere in the grounds.

"What's doing, Irishman?" he demanded.

"Nothing, Buttons; I'm just exercising."

His white flannels were as fresh as the morning, and

he wore a little blue cap perched saucily on the side of his head.

"I was pondering," he began, "the futility of man's effort to be helpful toward his fellows."

He leaned upon his stick and eyed me with solemn vacuity.

"I suppose I'll have to hear it; go on."

"I was always told in my youth that when an opportunity to do good offered one should seize upon it at once. No hesitation, no trifling! Only a few years ago I wandered into a little church in a hill town of Massachusetts where I waited for the Boston Express. It was a beautiful Sunday evening—I shall never forget it!" he sighed. "I am uncertain whether I was led thither by good impulse, or only because the pews were more comfortable than the benches at the railway station. I arrived early and an usher seated me up front near a window and gave me an armful of books and a pamphlet on foreign missions. Other people began to come in pretty soon; and then I heard a lot of giggling and a couple of church pillars began chasing a stray dog up and down the aisles. I was placing my money on the taller pillar; he had the best reach of leg, and, besides, the other chap had side whiskers, which are not

good for sprinting,—they offer just so much more resistance to the wind. The unseemliness of the thing offended my sense of propriety. The sound of the chase broke in harshly upon my study of Congo missions. After much pursuing the dog sought refuge between my legs. I picked him up tenderly in my arms and dropped him gently, Donovan, gently, from the window. Now wasn't that seizing an opportunity when you found it, so to speak, underfoot?"

"No doubt of it at all. Hurry with the rest of it, Buttons!"

"Well, that pup fell with a sickening yelp through a skylight into the basement where the choir was vesting itself, and hit a bishop—actually struck a young and promising bishop who had never done anything to me. They got the constable and made a horrible row, and besides paying for the skylight I had to give the church a new organ to square myself with the bishop, who was a friend of a friend of mine in Kentucky who once gave me a tip on the Derby. Since then the very thought of foreign missions makes me ill. I always hear that dog—it was the usual village mongrel of evil ancestry—crashing through the skylight. What's doing this morning, Irishman?"

I linked my arm in his and led the way toward Glenarm House. There was much to be done before I could bring together the warring members of the house of Holbrook, and Gillespie could, I felt, be relied on in emergencies. He broke forth at once.

"I want to see her—I've got to see her!"

"Who—Helen? Then you'll have to wait a while, for she's gone for a paddle or a gallop, I'm not sure which, and won't be back for a couple of hours. But you have grown too daring. Miss Pat is still here, and you can't expect me to arrange meetings for you every day in the year."

"I've got to see her," he repeated, and his tone was utterly joyless. "I don't understand her, Donovan."

"Man is not expected to understand woman, my dear Buttons. At the casino last night everything was as gay as an octogenarian's birthday cake."

He stopped in the shadow of the house and seized my arm.

"You told her something about me last night. She was all right until you took her away and talked with her at the casino. On the way home she was moody and queer—a different girl altogether. You are not on the square; you are playing on too many sides of this game."

"You're in love, that's all. These suspicions and apprehensions are leading symptoms. Up there at the casino, with the water washing beneath and the stars overhead and the band playing waltzes, a spell was upon you both. Even a hardened old sinner like me could feel it. I've had palpitations all day! Cheer up! In your own happy phrase, everything points to plus."

"I tell you she turned on me, and that you are responsible for it!"—and he glared at me angrily.

"Now, Buttons! You're not going to take that attitude toward me, after all I have done for you! I really took some trouble to arrange that little meeting last night; and here you come with sad eye and mournful voice and rebuke me!"

"I tell you she was different. She had never been so kind to me as she was there at the casino; but as we came back she changed, and was ready to fling me aside. I asked her to leave this place and marry me to-day, and she only laughed at me!"

"Now, Buttons, you are letting your imagination get the better of your common sense. If you're going to take your lady's moods so hard you'd better give up trying to understand the ways of woman. It's wholly possible that Helen was tired and didn't want to be made love to. It

seems to me that you are singularly lacking in consideration. But I can't talk to you all morning; I have other things to do; but if you will find a cool corner of the house and look at picture-books until I'm free I'll promise to be best man for you when you're married; and I predict your marriage before Christmas—a happy union of the ancient houses of Holbrook and Gillespie. Run along like a good boy and don't let Miss Pat catch sight of you."

"Do you keep a goat, a donkey or a mule—any of the more ruminative animals?" he asked with his saddest intonation.

"The cook keeps a parrot, and there's a donkey in one of the pastures."

"Good. Are his powers of vocalization unimpaired?"

"First rate. I occasionally hear his vesper hymn. He's in good voice."

"Then I may speak to him, soul to soul, if I find that I bore myself."

We climbed the steps to the cool shadows of the terrace. As we stood a moment looking out on the lake we saw, far away toward the northern shore, the *Stiletto,* that seemed just to have slipped out from the lower lake. The humor of the situation pleased me; Helen

was off there in the sloop playing at being kidnapped to harass her aunt into coming to terms with Henry Holbrook, and she was doubtless rejoicing in the fact that she had effected a combination of events that would make her father's case irresistible.

But there was no time to lose. I made Gillespie comfortable indoors and sent Ijima to get the bag I had asked for; and a few minutes later the launch was skimming over the water toward the canoe-maker's house at Red Gate.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ROCKET SIGNAL

Blow up the trumpet in the new moon.
—The Psalter.

Rosalind was cutting sweet peas in the garden where they climbed high upon a filmy net, humming softly to herself. She was culling out white ones, which somehow suggested her own white butterflies—a proper business for any girl on a sunny morning, with the dew still bright where the shadows lay, with bird-wings flashing about her, and the kindliest of airs blowing her hair.

"A penny for your thoughts!" I challenged.

She snipped an imaginary flower from the air in my direction.

"Keep your money! I was not thinking of you! You wear, sir, an intent commercial air; have you thread and needles in your pack?"

"It is ordained that we continue the game of last night. To-day you are to invade the very citadel and

deceive your aunt. Your cousin has left without notice and the situation demands prompt action."

I was already carrying the suit-case toward the house, explaining as we walked along together.

"But was I so successful last night? Was he really deceived, or did he just play that he was?"

"He's madly in love with you. You stole away all his senses. But he thought you changed toward him unaccountably on the way home."

"But why didn't she tell him?—she must have told him."

"Oh, I took care of that! I rather warned her against betraying us. And now she's trying to punish me by being kidnapped!"

Rosalind paused at the threshold, gathering the stems of the sweet peas in her hands.

"Do you think," she began, "do you think he really liked me—I mean the real me?"

"Like you! That is not the right word for it. He's gloomily dreaming of you—the real you—at this very moment over at Glenarm. But do hasten into these things that Sister Margaret picked out for you. I must see your father before I carry you off. We've no time to waste, I can tell you!"

The canoe-maker heard my story in silence and shook his head.

"It is impossible; we should only get into deeper trouble. I have no great faith in this resemblance. It may have worked once on young Gillespie, but women have sharper eyes."

"But it must be tried!" I pleaded. "We are approaching the end of these troubles, and nothing must be allowed to interfere. Your sister wishes to see you; this is her birthday."

"So it is! So it is!" exclaimed the canoe-maker with feeling.

"Helen must be saved from her own folly. Her aunt must not know of this latest exploit; it would ruin everything."

As we debated Rosalind joined her persuasions to mine.

"Aunt Pat must not know what Helen has done if we can help it," she said.

While she changed her clothes I talked on at the house-boat with her father.

"My sister has asked for me?"

"Yes; your sister is ready to settle with Henry; but she wishes to see you first. She has begged me to find

you; but Helen must go back to her aunt. This fraudulent kidnapping must never be known to Miss Pat. And on the other hand, I hope it may not be necessary for Helen to know the truth about her father."

"I dare say she would sacrifice my own daughter quickly enough," he said.

"No; you are wrong; I do not believe it! She is making no war on you, or on her aunt! It's against me! She enjoys a contest; she's trying to beat me."

"She believes that I forged the Gillespie notes and ruined her father. Henry has undoubtedly told her so."

"Yes; and he has used her to get them away from young Gillespie. There's no question about that. But I have the notes, and I propose holding them for your protection. But I don't want to use them if I can help it."

"I appreciate what you are doing for me," he said quietly, but his eyes were still troubled and I saw that he had little faith in the outcome.

"Your sister is disposed to deal generously with Henry. She does not know where the dishonor lies."

"'We are all honorable men,'" he replied bitterly, slowly pacing the floor. His sleeves were rolled away from his sun-browned arms, his shirt was open at the

throat, and though he wore the rough clothes of a mechanic he looked more the artist at work in a rural studio than the canoe-maker of the Tippecanoe. He walked to a window and looked down for a moment upon the singing creek, then came back to me and spoke in a different tone.

"I have given these years of my life to protecting my brother, and they must not be wasted. I have nothing to say against him; I shall keep silent."

"He has forfeited every right. Now is your time to punish him," I said; but Arthur Holbrook only looked at me pityingly.

"I don't want revenge, Mr. Donovan, but I am almost in a mood for justice," he said with a rueful smile; and just then Rosalind entered the shop.

"Is my fate decided?" she demanded.

The sight of her seemed to renew the canoe-maker's distress, and I led the way at once to the door. I think that in spite of my efforts to be gay and to carry the affair off lightly, we all felt that the day was momentous.

"When shall I expect you back?" asked Holbrook, when we had reached the launch.

"Early to-night," I answered.

"But if anything should happen here?" The tears

flashed in Rosalind's eyes, and she clung a moment to his hand.

"He will hardly be troubled by daylight, and this evening he can send up a rocket if any one molests him. Go ahead, Ijima!"

As we cleared Battle Orchard and sped on toward Glenarm there was a sting in the wind, and Lake Annandale had fretted itself into foam. We saw the *Stiletto* running prettily before the wind along the Glenarm shore, and I stopped the engine before crossing her wake and let the launch jump the waves. Helen would not, I hoped, believe me capable of attempting to palm off Rosalind on Miss Pat; and I had no wish to undeceive her. My passenger had wrapped herself in my mackintosh and taken my cap, so that at the distance at which we passed she was not recognizable.

Sister Margaret was waiting for us at the Glenarm pier. I had been a little afraid of Sister Margaret. It was presuming a good deal to take her into the conspiracy, and I stood by in apprehension while she scrutinized Rosalind. She was clearly bewildered and drew close to the girl, as Rosalind threw off the wet mackintosh and flung down the dripping cap.

"Will she do, Sister Margaret?"

"I believe she will; I really believe she will!" And the Sister's face brightened with relief. She had a color in her face that I had not seen before, as the joy of the situation took hold of her. She was, I realized, a woman after all, and a young woman at that, with a heart not hardened against life's daily adventures.

"It is time for luncheon. Miss Pat expects you, too."

"Then I must leave you to instruct Miss Holbrook and carry off the first meeting. Miss Holbrook has been—"

"—For a long walk"—the Sister supplied—"and will enter St. Agatha's parlor a little tired from her tramp. She shall go at once to her room—with me. I have put out a white gown for her; and at luncheon we will talk only of safe things."

"And I shall have this bouquet of sweet peas," added Rosalind, "that I brought from a farmer's garden near by, as an offering for Aunt Pat's birthday. And you will both be there to keep me from making mistakes."

"Then after luncheon we shall drive until Miss Pat's birthday dinner; and the dinner shall be on the terrace at Glenarm, which is even now being decorated for a fête occasion. And before the night is old Helen shall be back. Good luck attend us all!" I said; and we parted in the best of spirits.

I had forgotten Gillespie, and was surprised to find him at the table in my room, absorbed in business papers.

"'Button, button, who's got the button!'" he chanted as he looked me over. "You appear to have been swimming in your clothes. I had my mail sent out here. I've got to shut down the factory at Ponsocket. The thought of it bores me extravagantly. What time's luncheon?"

"Whenever you ring three times. I'm lunching out."

"Ladies?" he asked, raising his brows. "You appear to be a little social favorite; couldn't you get me in on something? How about dinner?"

"I am myself entertaining at dinner; and your name isn't on the list, I'm sorry to say, Buttons. But to-morrow! Everything will be possible to-morrow. I expect Miss Pat and Helen here to-night. It's Miss Pat's birthday, and I want to make it a happy day for her. She's going to settle with Henry as soon as some preliminaries are arranged, so the war's nearly over."

"She can't settle with him until something definite is known about Arthur. If he's really dead—"

"I've promised to settle that; but I must hurry now. Will you meet me at the Glenarm boat-house at eight?

If I'm not there, wait. I shall have something for you to do."

"Meanwhile I'm turned out of your house, am I? But I positively decline to go until I'm fed."

As I got into a fresh coat he played a lively tune on the electric bell, and I left him giving his orders to the butler.

I was reassured by the sound of voices as I passed under the windows of St. Agatha's, and Sister Margaret met me in the hall with a smiling face.

"Luncheon waits. We will go out at once. Everything has passed off smoothly, perfectly."

I did not dare look at Rosalind until we were seated in the dining-room. Her sweet peas graced the center of the round table, and Sister Margaret had placed them in a tall vase so that Rosalind was well screened from her aunt's direct gaze. The Sister had managed admirably. Rosalind's hair was swept up in exactly Helen's pompadour; and in one of Helen's white gowns, with Helen's own particular shade of scarlet ribbon at her throat and waist, the resemblance was even more complete than I had thought it before. But we were cast at once upon deep waters.

"Helen, where did you find that article on Charles

Lamb you read the other evening? I have looked for it everywhere."

Rosalind took rather more time than was necessary to help herself to the asparagus, and my heart sank; but Sister Margaret promptly saved the day.

"It was in the *Round World*. That article we were reading on The Authorship of the Collects is in the same number."

"Yes; of course," said Rosalind, turning to me.

Art seemed a safe topic; and I steered for the open, and spoke in a large way, out of my ignorance, of Michelangelo's influence, winding up presently with a suggestion that Miss Pat should have her portrait painted. This was a successful stroke, for we all fell into a discussion of contemporaneous portrait painters about whom Sister Margaret fortunately knew something; but a cold chill went down my back a moment later when Miss Pat turned upon Rosalind and asked her a direct question:

"Helen, what was the name of the artist who did that miniature of your mother?"

Sister Margaret swallowed a glass of water, and I stooped to pick up my napkin.

"Van Arsdel, wasn't it?" asked Rosalind instantly.

"Yes; so it was," replied Miss Pat. Luck was favoring us, and Rosalind was rising to the emergency splendidly. It appeared afterward that her own mother had been painted by the same artist, and she had boldly risked the guess. Sister Margaret and I were frightened into a discussion of the possibilities of aërial navigation, with a vague notion, I think, of keeping the talk in the air, and it sufficed until we had concluded the simple luncheon. I walked beside Miss Pat to the parlor. The sky had cleared, and I broached a drive at once. I had read in the newspapers that a considerable body of regular troops was passing near Annandale on a practice march from Fort Sheridan to a rendezvous somewhere to the south of us.

"Let us go and see the soldiers," I suggested.

"Very well, Larry," she said. "We can make believe they are sent out to do honor to my birthday. You are a thoughtful boy. I can never thank you for all your consideration and kindness. And you will not fail to find Arthur,—I am asking you no questions; I'd rather not know where he is. I'm afraid of truth!" She turned her head away quickly—we were seated by ourselves in a corner of the room. "I am afraid, I am afraid to ask!"

"He is well; quite well. I shall have news of him to-night."

She glanced across the room to where Rosalind and Sister Margaret talked quietly together. I felt Miss Pat's hand touch mine, and suddenly there were tears in her eyes.

"I was wrong! I was most unjust in what I said to you of her. She was all tenderness, all gentleness when she came in this morning." She fumbled at her belt and held up a small cluster of the sweet peas that Rosalind had brought from Red Gate.

"I told you so!" I said, trying to laugh off her contrition. "What you said to me is forgotten, Miss Pat."

"And now when everything is settled, if she wants to marry Gillespie, let her do it."

"But she won't! Haven't I told you that Helen shall never marry him?"

I had ordered a buckboard, and it was now announced.

"Don't trouble to go up-stairs, Aunt Pat; I will bring your things for you," said Rosalind; and Miss Pat turned upon me with an air of satisfaction and pride, as much as to say, "You see how devoted she is to me!"

I wish to acknowledge here my obligations to Sister Margaret for giving me the benefit of her care and

resourcefulness on that difficult day. There was no nice detail that she overlooked, no danger that she did not anticipate. She sat by Miss Pat on the long drive, while Rosalind and I chattered nonsense behind them. We were so fortunate as to strike the first battalion, and saw it go into camp on a bit of open prairie to await the arrival of the artillery that followed. But at no time did I lose sight of the odd business that still lay ahead of me, nor did I remember with any satisfaction how Helen, somewhere across woodland and lake, chafed at the delayed climax of her plot. The girl at my side, lovely and gracious as she was, struck me increasingly as but a tame shadow of that other one, so like and so unlike! I marveled that Miss Pat had not seen it; and in a period of silence on the drive home I think Rosalind must have guessed my thought; for I caught her regarding me with a mischievous smile and she said, as Miss Pat and Sister Margaret rather too generously sought to ignore us:

"You can see now how different I am—how very different!"

When I left them at St. Agatha's with an hour to spare before dinner, Sister Margaret assured me with her eyes that there was nothing to fear.

I was nervously pacing the long terrace when I saw my guests approaching. I told the butler to order dinner at once and went down to meet them. Miss Pat declared that she never felt better; and under the excitement of the hour Sister Margaret's eyes glowed brightly.

"Sister Margaret is wonderful!" whispered Rosalind. "Aren't my clothes becoming? She found them and got me into them; and she has kept me away from Aunt Pat and taken me over the hard places wonderfully. I really don't know who I am," she laughed; "but it's quite clear that you have seen the difference. I must play up now and try to be brilliant—like Helen!" she said. "I can tell by the things in Helen's room, that I'm much less sophisticated. I found his photograph, by the way!"

"What!" I cried so abruptly that the others turned and looked at us. Rosalind laughed in honest glee.

"Mr. Gillespie's photograph. I think I shall keep it. It was upside down in a trunk where Sister Margaret told me I should find these pretty slippers. Do you know, this playing at being somebody else is positively uncanny. But this gown—isn't it fetching?"

"It's pink, isn't it? You said that photograph was face down, didn't you?"

"It was! And at the very bottom under a pair of overshoes."

"Well, I hope *you* will be good to him," I observed.

"Mr. Donovan," she said, in a mocking tone that was so like Helen's that I stared stupidly, "Mr. Donovan, you are a person of amazing penetration!"

As we sat down in the screened corner of the broad terrace, with the first grave approach of twilight in the sky, and the curved trumpet of the young moon hanging in the west, it might have seemed to an onlooker that the gods of chance had oddly ordered our little company. Miss Patricia in white was a picture of serenity, with the smile constant about her lips, happy in her hope for the future. Rosalind, fresh to these surroundings, showed clearly her pleasure in the pretty setting of the scene, and read into it, in bright phrases, the delight of a story-book incident.

"Let me see," she said reflectively, "just who we are: we are the lady of the castle perilous dining *al fresco*, with the abbess, who is also a noble lady, come across the fields to sit at meat with her. And you, sir, are a knight full orgulous, feared in many lands, and sworn to the defense of these ladies."

"And you,"—and Miss Pat's eyes were beautifully

kind and gentle, as she took the cue and turned to Rosalind, "you are the well-loved daughter of my house, faithful in all service, in all ways self-forgetful and kind, our hope, our joy and our pride."

It may have been the spirit of the evening that touched us, or only the light of her countenance and the deep sincerity of her voice; but I knew that tears were bright in all our eyes for a moment. And then Rosalind glanced at the western heavens through the foliage.

"There are the stars, Aunt Pat—brighter than ever to-night for your birthday."

Presently, as the dark gathered about us, the candles were lighted, and their glow shut out the world. To my relief the three women carried the talk alone, leaving me to my own thoughts of Helen and my plans for restoring her to her aunt with no break in the new confidence that Rosalind had inspired. I had so completely yielded myself to this undercurrent of reflection that I was startled to find Miss Pat with the coffee service before her.

"Larry, you are dreaming. How can I remember whether you take sugar?"

Sister Margaret's eyes were upon me reproachfully for my inattention, and my heart-beats quickened as

eight strokes of the chapel chime stole lingeringly through the quiet air. I had half-raised my cup when I was startled by a question from Miss Pat—a request innocent enough and spoken, it seemed, utterly without intention.

"Let me see your ring a moment, Helen."

Sister Margaret flashed a glance of inquiry at me, but Rosalind met the situation instantly.

"Certainly, Aunt Pat,"—and she slipped the ring from her finger, passed it across the table, and folded her hands quietly upon the white cloth. She did not look at me, but I saw her breath come and go quickly. If the rings were not the same then we were undone. This thought gripped the three of us, and I heard my cup beating a tattoo on the edge of my saucer in the tense silence, while Miss Pat bent close to the candle before her and studied the ring, turning it over slowly. Rosalind half opened her lips to speak, but Sister Margaret's snowy hand clasped the girl's fingers. The little circlet of gold with its beautiful green stone had been to me one of the convincing items of the remarkable resemblance between the cousins; but if there should be some differentiating mark Miss Pat was not so stupid as to overlook it.

Miss Pat put down the ring abruptly, and looked at Rosalind and then smiled quizzically at me.

"You are a clever boy, Larry."

Then, turning to Rosalind, Miss Pat remarked, with the most casual air imaginable:

"Helen pronounces either with the long *e*. I noticed at luncheon that you say eyether. Where's your father, Rosalind?"

My eyes were turning from her to Rosalind when, on her last word, as though by prearranged signal, far across the water, against the dark shadows of the lake's remoter shore, a rocket's spent ball broke and flung its stars against the night.

I spoke no word, but leaped over the stone balustrade and ran to the boat-house where Gillespie waited.

"Where's your father, Rosalind?" Page 364

CHAPTER XXIV

"WITH MY HANDS"

Maybe in spite of their tameless days
  Of outcast liberty,
They're sick at heart for the homely ways
  Where their gathered brothers be.

And oft at night, when the plains fall dark
  And hills loom large and dim,
For the shepherd's voice they mutely hark,
  And their souls go out to him.

Meanwhile "Black sheep! black sheep!" we cry,
  Safe in the inner fold:
And maybe they hear, and wonder why,
  And marvel, out in the cold.

—*Richard Burton.*

Gillespie was smoking his pipe on the boat-house steps. He had come over from the village in his own launch, which tossed placidly beside mine. Ijima stepped forward promptly with a lantern as I ran out upon the planking of the pier.

"Jump into my launch, Gillespie, and be in a hurry!" and to my relief he obeyed without his usual parley. Ijima cast us off, the engine sputtered a moment, and

then the launch got away. I bade Gillespie steer, and when we were free of the pier told him to head for the Tippecanoe.

The handful of stars that had brightened against the sky had been a real shock, and I accused myself in severe terms for having left Arthur Holbrook alone. As we swept into the open Glenarm House stood forth from the encircling wood, marked by the bright lights of the terrace where Miss Pat had, with so much composure and in so few words, made comedy of my attempt to shield Helen. I had certainly taken chances, but I had reckoned only with a man's wits, which, to say the least, are not a woman's; and I had contrived a new situation and had now incurred the wrath and indignation of three women where there had been but one before! In throwing off my coat my hand touched the envelope containing the forged notes which I had thrust into my pocket before dinner, and the contact sobered me; there was still a chance for me to be of use. But at the thought of what might be occurring at the house-boat on the Tippecanoe I forced the launch's speed to the limit. Gillespie still maintained silence, grimly clenching his empty pipe. He now roused himself and bawled at me:

"Did you ever meet the coroner of this county?"

"No!" I shouted.

"Well, you will—coming down! You'll blow up in about three minutes."

I did not slow down until we reached Battle Orchard, where it was necessary to feel our way across the shallow channel. Here I shut off the power and paddled with an oar.

As we floated by the island a lantern flashed at the water's edge and disappeared. But my first errand was at the canoe-maker's; the whereabouts of Helen and the *Stiletto* were questions that must wait.

We were soon creeping along the margin of the second lake seeking the creek, whose intake quickly lay hold of us.

"We'll land just inside, on the west bank, Gillespie." A moment later we jumped out and secured the launch. I wrapped our lantern in Gillespie's coat, and ran up the bank to the path. At the top I turned and spoke to him.

"You'll have to trust me. I don't know what may be happening here, but surely our interests are the same tonight."

He caught me roughly by the arm.

"If this means any injury to Helen—"

"No! It is for her!" And he followed silently at my heels toward Red Gate.

The calm of the summer night lay upon the creek that babbled drowsily in its bed. We seemed to have this corner of the world to ourselves, and the thump of our feet in the path broke heavily on the night silence. As we crossed the lower end of the garden I saw the cottage mistily outlined among the trees near the highway, and, remembering Gillespie's unfamiliarity with the place, I checked my pace to guide him. I caught a glimpse of the lights of the house-boat below.

The voices of two men in loud debate rang out sharply upon us through the open windows of the house-boat as we crept down upon the deck. Then followed the sound of blows, and the rattle of furniture knocked about, and as we reached the door a lamp fell with a crash and the place was dark. We seemed to strike matches at the same instant, and as they blazed upon their sticks we looked down upon Arthur Holbrook, who lay sprawling with his arms outflung on the floor, and over him stood his brother with hands clenched, his face twitching.

"I have killed him—I have killed him!" he muttered several times in a low whisper. "I had to do it. There was no other way."

My blood went cold at the thought that we were too late. Gillespie was fumbling about, striking matches, and I was somewhat reassured by the sound of my own voice as I called him.

"There are candles at the side—make a light, Gillespie."

And soon we were taking account of one another in the soft candle-light.

"I must go," said Henry huskily, looking stupidly down upon his brother, who lay quite still, his head resting on his arm.

"You will stay," I said; and I stood beside him while Gillespie filled a pail at the creek and laved Arthur's wrists and temples with cool water. We worked a quarter of an hour before he gave any signs of life; but when he opened his eyes Henry flung himself down in a chair and mopped his forehead.

"He is not dead," he said, grinning foolishly.

"Where is Helen?" I demanded.

"She's safe," he replied cunningly, nodding his head. "I suppose Pat has sent you to take her back. She may go, if you have brought my money." Cunning and greed, and the marks of drink, had made his face repulsive. Gillespie got Arthur to his feet a moment later, and I

gave him brandy from a flask in the cupboard. His brother's restoration seemed now to amuse Henry.

"It was a mere love-tap. You're tougher than you look, Arthur. It's the simple life down here in the woods. My own nerves are all gone." He turned to me with the air of dominating the situation. "I'm glad you've come, you and our friend of button fame. Rivals, gentlemen? A friendly rivalry for my daughter's hand flatters the house of Holbrook. Between ourselves I favor you, Mr. Donovan; the button-making business is profitable, but damned vulgar. Now, Helen—"

"That will do!"—and I clapped my hand on his shoulder roughly. "I have business with you. Your sister is ready to settle with you; but she wishes to see Arthur first."

"No—no! She must not see him!" He leaped forward and caught hold of me. "She must not see him!" —and his cowardly fear angered me anew.

"You will do, Mr. Holbrook, very much as I tell you in this matter. I intend that your sister shall see her brother Arthur to-night, and time flies. This last play of yours, this flimsy trick of kidnapping, was sprung at a very unfortunate moment. It has delayed the settlement and done a grave injury to your daughter."

"Helen would have it; it was her idea!"

"If you speak of your daughter again in such a way I will break your neck and throw you into the creek!"

He stared a moment, then laughed aloud.

"So you are the one—are you? I really thought it was Buttons."

"I am the one, Mr. Holbrook. And now I am going to take your brother to your sister. She has asked for him, and she is waiting."

Arthur Holbrook came gravely toward us, and I have never been so struck with pity for a man as I was for him. There was a red circle on his brow where Henry's knuckles had cut, but his eyes showed no anger; they were even kind with the tenderness that lies in the eyes of women who have suffered. He advanced a step nearer his brother and spoke slowly and distinctly.

"You have nothing to fear, Henry. I shall tell her nothing."

"But"—Henry glanced uneasily from Gillespie to me —"Gillespie's notes. They are here among you somewhere. You shall not give them to Pat. If she knew—"

"If she knew you would not get a cent," I said, wishing him to know that I knew.

He whirled upon me hotly.

"You tricked Helen to get them, and now, by God! I want them! I want them!" And he struck at me crazily. I knocked his arm away, but he flung himself upon me, clasping me with his arms. I caught his wrists and held him for a moment. I wished to be done with him and off to Glenarm with Arthur; and he wasted time.

"I have that packet you sent Helen to get—I have it—still unopened! Your secret is as safe with me, Mr. Holbrook, as that other secret of yours with your Italian body-guard."

His face went white, then gray, and he would have fallen if I had not kept hold of him.

"Will you not be decent—reasonable—sane—for an hour, till we can present you as an honorable man to your sister? If you will not, your sailor shall deliver you to the law with his own hands. You delay matters—can't you see that we are your friends, that we are trying to protect you, that we are ready to lie to your sister that we may be rid of you?"

I was beside myself with rage and impatient that time must be wasted on him. I did not hear steps on the deck, or Gillespie's quick warning, and I had begun again, still holding Henry Holbrook close to me with one hand.

"We expect to deceive your sister—we will lie to her—lie to her—lie to her—"

"For God's sake, stop!" cried Arthur Holbrock, clutching my arm.

I flung round and faced Miss Pat and Rosalind. They stood for a moment in the doorway; then Miss Pat advanced slowly toward us where we formed a little semicircle, and as I dropped Henry's wrists the brothers stood side by side. Arthur took a step forward, half murmuring his sister's name; then he drew back and waited, his head bowed, his hands thrust into the side pockets of his coat. In the dead quiet I heard the babble of the creek outside, and when Miss Pat spoke her voice seemed to steal off and mingle with the subdued murmur of the stream.

"Gentlemen, what is it you wish to lie to me about?"

A brave little smile played about Miss Pat's lips. She stood there in the light of the candles, all in white as I had left her on the terrace of Glenarm, in her lace cap, with only a light shawl about her shoulders. I felt that the situation might yet be saved, and I was about to speak when Henry, with some wild notion of justifying himself, broke out stridently:

"Yes; they meant to lie to you! They plotted against

me and hounded me when I wished to see you peaceably and to make amends. They have now charged me with murder; they are ready to swear away my honor, my life. I am glad you are here that you may see for yourself how they are against me."

He broke off a little grandly, as though convinced by his own words.

"Yes; father speaks the truth, as Mr. Donovan can tell you!"

I could have sworn that it was Rosalind who spoke; but there by Rosalind's side in the doorway stood Helen. Her head was lifted, and she faced us all with her figure tense, her eyes blazing. Rosalind drew away a little, and I saw Gillespie touch her hand. It was as though a quicker sense than sight had on the instant undeceived him; but he did not look at Rosalind; his eyes were upon the angry girl who was about to speak again. Miss Pat glanced about, and her eyes rested on me.

"Larry, what were the lies you were going to tell me?" she asked, and smiled again.

"They were about father; he wished to involve him in dishonor. But he shall not, he shall not!" cried Helen.

"Is that true, Larry?" asked Miss Pat.

"I have done the best I could," I replied evasively.

Miss Pat scrutinized us all slowly as though studying our faces for the truth. Then she repeated:

"But if either of my said sons shall have been touched by dishonor through his own act, as honor is accounted, reckoned and valued among men—" and ceased abruptly, looking from Arthur to Henry. "What was the truth about Gillespie?" she asked.

And Arthur would have spoken. I saw the word that would have saved his brother formed upon his lips.

Miss Pat alone seemed unmoved; I saw her hand open and shut at her side as she controlled herself, but her face was calm and her voice was steady when she turned appealingly to the canoe-maker.

"What is the truth, Arthur?" she asked quietly.

"Why go into this now? Why not let bygones be bygones?"—and for a moment I thought I had checked the swift current. It was Helen I wished to save now, from herself, from the avalanche she seemed doomed to bring down upon her head.

"I will hear what you have to say, Arthur," said Miss Pat; and I knew that there was no arresting the tide. I snatched out the sealed envelope and turned with it to Arthur Holbrook; and he took it into his hands and turned it over quietly, though his hands trembled.

"Tell me the truth, gentlemen!"—and Miss Pat's voice thrilled now with anger.

"Trickery, more trickery; those were stolen from Helen!" blurted Henry, his eyes on the envelope; but we were waiting for the canoe-maker to speak, and Henry's words rang emptily in the shop.

Arthur looked at his brother; then he faced his sister.

"Henry is not guilty," he said calmly.

He turned with a quick gesture and thrust the envelope into the flame of one of the candles; but Helen sprang forward and caught away the blazing packet and smothered the flame between her hands.

"We will keep the proof," she said in a tone of triumph; and I knew then how completely she had believed in her father.

"I don't know what is in that packet," said Gillespie slowly, speaking for the first time. "It has never been opened. My lawyer told me that father had sworn to a statement about the trouble with Holbrook Brothers and placed it with the notes. My father was a peculiar man in some ways," continued Gillespie, embarrassed by the attention that was now riveted upon him. "His lawyer told me that I was to open that package—before—before marrying into"—and he grew red and stammered help-

lessly, with his eyes on the floor—"before marrying into the Holbrook family. I gave up that packet"—and he hesitated, coloring, and turning from Helen to Rosalind —"by mistake. But it's mine, and I demand it now."

"I wish Aunt Pat to open the envelope," said Rosalind, very white.

Henry turned a look of appeal upon his brother; but Miss Pat took the envelope from Helen and tore it open; and we stood by as though we waited for death or watched earth fall upon a grave. She bent down to one of the candles nearest her and took out the notes, which were wrapped in a sheet of legal cap. A red seal brightened in the light, and we heard the slight rattle of the paper in her tremulous fingers as she read. Suddenly a tear flashed upon the white sheet. When she had quite finished she gathered Gillespie's statement and the notes in her hand and turned and gave them to Henry; but she did not speak to him or meet his eyes. She crossed to where Arthur stood beside me, his head bowed, and as she advanced he turned away; but her arms stole over his shoulders and she said "Arthur" once, and again very softly.

"I think," she said, turning toward us all, with her sweet dignity, her brave air, that touched me as at first

and always, beyond any words of mine to describe, but strong and beautiful and sweet and thrilling through me now, like bugles blown at dawn; "I think that we do well, Arthur, to give Henry his money."

And now it was Arthur's voice that rose in the shop; and it seemed that he spoke of his brother as of one who was afar off. We listened with painful intentness to this man who had suffered much and given much, and who still, in his simple heart, asked no praise for what he had done.

"He was so strong, and I was weak; and I did for him what I could. And what I gave, I gave freely, for it is not often in this world that the weak may help the strong. He had the gifts, Pat, that I had not, and troops of friends; and he had ambitions that in my weakness I was not capable of; so I had not much to give. But what I had, Pat, I gave to him; I went to Gillespie and confessed; I took the blame; and I came here and worked with my hands—with my hands—" And he extended them as though the proof were asked; and kept repeating, between his sobs, "With my hands."

CHAPTER XXV

DAYBREAK

Just as of old! The world rolls on and on;
The day dies into night—night into dawn—
Dawn into dusk—through centuries untold.—
Just as of old.

* * * * * * *

Lo! where is the beginning, where the end
Of living, loving, longing? *Listen*, friend!—
God answers with a silence of pure gold—
Just as of old.

—*James Whitcomb Riley.*

At midnight Gillespie and I discussed the day's affairs on the terrace at Glenarm. There were long pauses in our talk. Such things as we had seen and heard that night, in the canoe-maker's shop on the little creek, were beyond our poor range of words. And in the silences my own reflections were not wholly happy. If Miss Pat and Rosalind had not followed me to the canoe-maker's I might have spared Helen; but looking back, I would not change it now if I could. Helen had returned to St. Agatha's with her aunt, who would have

it so; and we had parted at the school door, Miss Pat and Helen, Gillespie and I, with restraint heavy upon us all. Miss Pat had, it seemed, summoned her lawyer from New York several days before, to discuss the final settlement of her father's estate; and he was expected the next morning. I had asked them all to Glenarm for breakfast; and Arthur Holbrook and Rosalind, and Henry, who had broken down at the end, had agreed to come.

As we talked on, Gillespie and I, there under the stars, he disclosed, all unconsciously, new and surprising traits, and I felt my heart warming to him.

"He's a good deal of a man, that Arthur Holbrook," he remarked after a long pause. "He's beyond me. The man who runs the enemy's lines to bring relief to the garrison, or the leader of a forlorn hope, is tame after this. I suppose the world would call him a fool."

"Undoubtedly," I answered. "But he didn't do it for the world; he did it for himself. We can't applaud a thing like that in the usual phrases."

"No," Gillespie added; "only get down on our knees and bow our heads in the dust before it."

He rose and paced the long terrace. In his boat-shoes and white flannels he glided noiselessly back and forth,

like a ghost in the star dusk. He paused at the western balustrade and looked off at St. Agatha's. Then he passed me and paused again, gazing lakeward through the wood, as though turning from Helen to Rosalind; and I knew that it was with her, far over the water, in the little cottage at Red Gate, that his thoughts lingered. But when he came and stood beside me and rested his hand on my shoulder I knew that he wished to speak of Helen and I took his hand, and spoke to him to make it easier.

"Well, old man!"

"I was thinking of Helen," he said.

"So was I, Buttons."

"They are different, the two. They are very different."

"They are as like as God ever made two people; and yet they are different."

"I think you understand Helen. I never did," he declared mournfully.

"You don't have to," I replied; and laughed, and rose and stood beside him. "And now there's something I want to speak to you about to-night. Helen borrowed some money of you a little while ago to meet one of her father's demands. I expect a draft for that money by the morning mail, and I want you to accept it with

my thanks, and hers. And the incident shall pass as though it had never been."

About one o'clock the wind freshened and the trees flung out their arms like runners rushing before it; and from the west marched a storm with banners of lightning. It was a splendid spectacle, and we went indoors only when the rain began to wash across the terrace. We still watched it from our windows after we went up-stairs, the lightning now blazing out blindingly, like sheets of flame from a furnace door, and again cracking about the house like a fiery whip.

"We ought to have brought Henry here to-night," remarked Gillespie. "He's alone over there on the island with that dago and they're very likely celebrating by getting drunk."

"The lightning's getting on your nerves; go to bed," I called back.

The storm left peace behind and I was abroad early, eager to have the first shock of the morning's meetings over. Gillespie greeted me cheerily and I told him to follow when he was ready. I went out and paced the walk between the house and St. Agatha's, and as I peered through the iron gate I saw Miss Pat come out of the house and turn into the garden. I came upon her walk-

ing slowly with her hands clasped behind her. She spoke first, as though to avoid any expression of sympathy, putting out her hand.

Filmy lace at the wrists gave to her hands a quaint touch akin to that imparted by the cap on her white head. I was struck afresh by the background that seemed always to be sketched in for her, and just now, beyond the bright garden, it was a candle-lighted garret, with trunks of old letters tied in dim ribbons, and lavender scented chests of Valenciennes and silks in forgotten patterns.

"I am well, quite well, Larry!"

"I am glad! I wished to be sure!"

"Do not trouble about me. I am glad of everything that has happened—glad and relieved. And I am grateful to you."

"I have served you ill enough. I stumbled in the dark much of the time. I wanted to spare you, Miss Pat."

"I know that; and you tried to save Helen. She was blind and misguided. She had believed in her father and the last blow crushed her. Everything looks dark to her. She refuses to come over this morning; she thinks she can not face her uncle, her cousin or you again."

"But she must come," I said. "It will be easier to-

day than at any later time. There's Gillespie, calling me now. He's going across the lake to meet Arthur and Rosalind. I shall take the launch over to the island to bring Henry. We should all be back at Glenarm in an hour. Please tell Helen that we must have her, that no one should stay away."

Miss Pat looked at me oddly, and her fingers touched a stalk of hollyhock beside her as her eyes rested on mine.

"Larry," she said, "do not be sorry for Helen if pity is all you have for her."

I laughed and seized her hands.

"Miss Pat, I could not feel pity for any one so skilled with the sword as she! It would be gratuitous! She put up a splendid fight, and it's to her credit that she stood by her father and resented my interference, as she had every right to. She was not really against you, Miss Pat; it merely happened that you were in the way when she struck at me with the foil, don't you see?"

"Not just that way, Larry,"—and she continued to gaze at me with a sweet distress in her eyes; then, "Rosalind is very different," she added.

"I have observed it! The ways in which they are utterly unlike are remarkable; but I mustn't keep Gil-

lespie waiting. Good-by for a little while!" And some foreboding told me that sorrow had not yet done with her.

Gillespie shouted impatiently as I ran toward him at the boat-house.

"It's the *Stiletto*," he called, pointing to where the sloop lay, midway of the lake. "She's in a bad way."

"The storm blew her out," I suggested, but the sight of the boat, listing badly as though water-logged, struck me ominously.

"We'd better pick her up," he said; and he was already dropping one of the canoes into the water. We paddled swiftly toward the sloop. The lake was still fretful from the storm's lashing, but the sky was without fleck or flaw. The earliest of the little steamers was crossing from the village, her whistle echoing and re-echoing round the lake.

"The sloop's about done for," said Gillespie over his shoulder; and we drove our blades deeper. The *Stiletto* was floating stern-on and rolling loggily, but retaining still, I thought, something of the sinister air that she had worn on her strange business through those summer days.

"She went to bed all right; see, her sails are furled

snug and everything's in shape. The storm drove her over here," said Gillespie. "She's struck something, or somebody's smashed her."

It seemed impossible that the storm unassisted had blown her from Battle Orchard across Lake Annandale; but we were now close upon her and seeking for means of getting aboard.

"She's a bit sloppy," observed Gillespie as we swung round and caught hold. The water gurgled drunkenly in the cuddy, and a broken lantern rattled on the deck. I held fast as he climbed over, sending me off a little as he jumped aboard, and I was working back again with the paddle when he cried out in alarm.

As I came alongside he came back to help me, and when he bent over to catch the painter, I saw that his face was white.

"We might have known it," he said. "It's the last and worst that could happen."

Face down across the cuddy lay the body of Henry Holbrook. His water-soaked clothing was torn as though in a fierce struggle. A knife thrust in the side told the story; he had crawled to the cuddy roof to get away from the water and had died there.

"It was the Italian," said Gillespie. "They must have

had a row last night after we left them, and it came to this. He chopped a hole in the *Stiletto* and set her adrift to sink."

I looked about for the steamer, which was backing away from the pier at Port Annandale, and signaled her with my handkerchief. And when I faced Gillespie again he pointed silently toward the lower lake, where a canoe rode the bright water.

Rosalind and her father were on their way from Red Gate to Glenarm. Two blades flashed in the sun as the canoe came toward us. Gillespie's lips quivered and he tried to speak as he pointed to them; and then we both turned silently toward St. Agatha's, where the chapel tower rose above the green wood.

"Stay and do what is to be done," I said. "I will find Helen and tell her."

THE END

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